

IXION IN HEAVEN.

THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE.

POPANILLA.

COUNT ALARCOS.

BY

DISRAELI.

LONDON:

DAVID BRYCE, 48. PATERNOSTER ROW.

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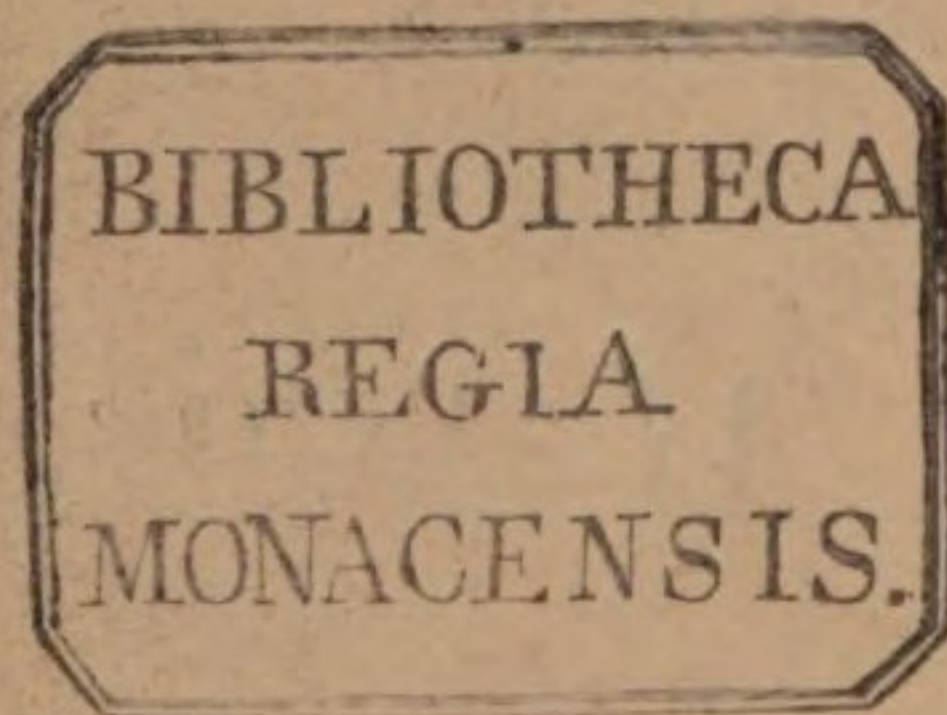
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IXION IN HEAVEN.

"Ixion, King of Thessaly, famous for its horses, married Dia, daughter of Deioneus, who, in consequence of his son-in-law's non-fulfilment of his engagements, stole away some of the monarch's steeds. Ixion concealed his resentment under the mask of friendship. He invited his father-in-law to a feast at Larissa, the capital of his kingdom; and when Deioneus arrived according to his appointment, he threw him into a pit which he had previously filled with burning coals. This treachery so irritated the neighbouring princes, that all of them refused to perform the usual ceremony, by which a man was then purified of murder, and Ixion was shunned and despised by all mankind. Jupiter had compassion upon him, carried him to heaven, and introduced him to the Father of the Gods. Such a favour, which ought to have awakened gratitude in Ixion, only served to inflame his bad passions; he became enamoured of Juno, and attempted to seduce her. Juno was willing to gratify the passion of Ixion, though, according to others," &c.—*Lemprière's Classical Dictionary*, Art. "Ixion."



IXION IN HEAVEN.

PART I.

I.

THE thunder groaned, the wind howled, the rain fell in hissing torrents, impenetrable darkness covered the earth.

A blue and forked flash darted a momentary light over the landscape. A Doric temple rose in the centre of a small and verdant plain, surrounded on all sides by green and hanging woods.

"Jove is my only friend," exclaimed a wanderer, as he muffled himself up in his mantle; "and were it not for the porch of his temple, this night, methinks, would complete the work of my loving wife and my dutiful subjects."

The thunder died away, the wind sank into silence, the rain ceased, and the parting clouds exhibited the glittering crescent of the young moon. A sonorous and majestic voice sounded from the skies:—

"Who art thou that hast no other friend than Jove?"

"One whom all mankind unite in calling a wretch."

"Art thou a philosopher?"

"If philosophy be endurance. But for the rest, I was sometime a king, and am now a scatterling."

"How do they call thee?"

"Ixion of Thessaly."

"Ixion of Thessaly! I thought he was a happy man. I heard that he was just married."

"Father of Gods and men! for I deem thee such, Thessaly is not Olympus. Conjugal felicity is only the portion of the Immortals!"

"Hem!—What! was Dia jealous, which is common,—or false, which is commoner,—or both, which is commonest?"

"It may be neither. We quarrelled about nothing. Where there is little sympathy, or too much, the splitting of a straw is plot enough for a domestic tragedy. I was careless, her friends stigmatised me as callous; she cold, her friends styled her magnanimous. Public opinion was all on her side, merely because I did not choose that the world should interfere between me and my wife. Dia took the world's advice upon every point, and the world decided that she always acted rightly. However, life is life, either in a palace or a cave. I am glad you ordered it to leave off thundering."

"A cool dog this.—And Dia left thee?"

"No; I left her."

"What, craven?"

"Not exactly. The truth is——'tis a long story. I was over head and ears in debt."

"Ah! that accounts for everything. Nothing is so harassing as a want of money. But what lucky fellows you Mortals are with your *post-obits*! We Immortals are deprived of this resource. I was obliged to get up a rebellion against my father, because he kept me so short, and could not die."

"You could have married for money. I did."

"I had no opportunity, there was so little female society in those days. When I came out, there were no heiresses except the *Parcæ*, confirmed old maids; and no very rich dowager, except my grandmother, old Terra."

"Just the thing; the older the better. However, I married Dia, the daughter of Deioneus, with a prodigious portion; but after the ceremony, the old gentleman would not fulfil his part of the contract without me giving up my stud. Can you conceive anything more unreasonable? I smothered my resentment at the time; for the truth is, my tradesmen all renewed my credit on the strength of the match, and so we went on very well for a year; but at last they began to smell a rat, and grew importunate. I entreated Dia to interfere; but she was a paragon of daughters, and always took the side of her father. If she had only been dutiful to her husband, she would have been a perfect woman. At last I invited Deioneus to the Larissa races, with the intention of conciliating him. The unprincipled old man bought the horse that I had backed, and by which I intended to have redeemed my fortunes, and withdrew it. My book was ruined. I dissembled my rage.

I dug a pit in our garden, and filled it with burning coals. As my father-in-law and myself were taking a stroll after dinner, the worthy Deioneus fell in, merely by accident. Dia proclaimed me as the murderer of her father, and, as a satisfaction to her wounded feelings, earnestly requested her subjects to decapitate her husband. She certainly was the best of daughters. There was no withstanding public opinion, an infuriated rabble, and a magnanimous wife at the same time. They surrounded my palace: I cut my way through the greasy-capped multitude, sword in hand, and gained a neighbouring Court, where I solicited my brother princes to purify me from the supposed murder. If I had only murdered a subject, they would have supported me against the people; but Deioneus being a crowned head, like themselves, they declared they would not countenance so immoral a being as his son-in-law. And so, at length, after much wandering, and shunned by all my species, I am here, Jove, in much higher society than I ever expected to mingle."

"Well, thou art a frank dog, and in a sufficiently severe scrape. The Gods must have pity on those for whom men have none. It is evident that Earth is too hot for thee at present, so I think thou hadst better come and stay a few weeks with us in Heaven."

"Take my thanks for hecatombs, great Jove. Thou art, indeed, a God!"

"I hardly know whether our life will suit you. We dine at sunset; for Apollo is so much engaged, that he cannot join us sooner, and no dinner goes off well without him. In the morning you are your own master, and must find amusement where you can. Diana will show you some tolerable sport. Do you shoot?"

"No arrow surer. Fear not for me, Ægiochus: I am always at home. But how am I to get to you?"

"I'll send Mercury; he is the best travelling companion in the world. What, ho! my Eagle!"

The clouds joined, and darkness again fell over the earth.

II.

"So! tread softly. Don't be nervous. Are you sick?"

"A little nausea; 'tis nothing."

"The novelty of the motion. The best thing is a beef-steak. We will stop at Taurus and take one."

"You have been a great traveller, Mercury?"

"I have seen the world."

"Ah! a wondrous spectacle. I long to travel."

"The same thing over and over again. Little novelty and much change. I am wearied with exertion, and if I could get a pension would retire."

"And yet travel brings wisdom."

"It cures us of care. Seeing much we feel little, and learn how very petty are all those great affairs which cost us such anxiety."

"I feel that already myself. Floating in this blue æther, what the devil is my wife to me, and her dirty earth! My persecuting enemies seem so many pismires; and as for my debts, which have occasioned me so many brooding moments, honour and infamy, credit and beggary, seem to me alike ridiculous."

"Your mind is opening, Ixion. You will soon be a man of the world. To the left, and keep clear of that star."

"Who lives there?"

"The Fates know, not I. Some low people who are trying to shine into notice. 'Tis a parvenu planet, and only sprung up into space within this century. We don't visit them."

"Poor devils! I feel hungry."

"All right. We shall get into heaven by the first dinner bolt. You cannot arrive at a strange house at a better moment. We shall just have time to dress. I would not spoil my appetite by luncheon. Jupiter keeps a capital cook."

"I have heard of Nectar and Ambrosia."

"Poh! nobody touches them. They are regular old-fashioned celestial food, and merely put upon the side-table. Nothing goes down in Heaven now but infernal cookery. We took our *chef* from Proserpine."

"Were you ever in Hell?"

"Several times. 'Tis the fashion now among the Olympians to pass the winter there."

"Is this the season in Heaven?"

"Yes; you are lucky. Olympus is quite full."

"It was very kind of Jupiter to invite me."

"Ay! he has his good points. And, no doubt, he has taken a liking to you, which is all very well. But be upon your guard. He has no heart, and is as capricious as he is tyrannical."

“Gods cannot be more unkind to me than men have been.”

“All those who have suffered think they have seen the worst. A great mistake. However, you are now in the high road to preferment, so we will not be dull. There are some good fellows enough amongst us. You will like old Neptune.”

“He is there now?”

“Yes, he generally passes his summer with us. There is little stirring in the ocean at that season.”

“I am anxious to see Mars.”

“Oh! a brute, more a bully than a hero. Not at all in the best set. These mustachioed gentry are by no means the rage at present in Olympus. The women are all literary now, and Minerva has quite eclipsed Venus. Apollo is our hero. You must read his last work.”

“I hate reading.”

“So do I. I have no time, and seldom do anything in that way but glance at a newspaper. Study and action will not combine.”

“I suppose I shall find the Goddesses very proud?”

“You will find them as you find women below, of different dispositions with the same object. Venus is a flirt; Minerva a prude, who fancies she has a correct taste and a strong mind; and Juno a politician. As for the rest, faint heart never won fair lady, take a friendly hint, and don't be alarmed.”

“I fear nothing. My mind mounts with my fortunes. We are above the clouds. They form beneath us a vast and snowy region, dim and irregular, as I have sometimes seen them clustering upon the horizon's ridge at sunset, like a raging sea stilled by some sudden supernatural frost and frozen into form! How bright the air above us, and how delicate its fragrant breath! I scarcely breathe, and yet my pulses beat like my first youth. I hardly feel my being. A splendour falls upon your presence. You seem, indeed, a God! Am I so glorious? This—this is Heaven!”

III.

The travellers landed on a vast flight of sparkling steps of lapis-lazuli. Ascending, they entered beautiful gardens; winding walks that yielded to the feet, and accelerated your passage by their rebounding pressure; fragrant shrubs covered with dazzling flowers,

the fleeting tints of which changed every moment, groups of tall trees with strange birds of brilliant and variegated plumage, singing and reposing in their sheeny foliage, and fountains of perfumes.

Before them rose an illimitable and golden palace, with high spreading domes of pearl, and long windows of crystal. Around the huge portal of ruby was ranged a company of winged genii, who smiled on Mercury as he passed them with his charge.

"The father of Gods and men is dressing," said the son of Maia. "I shall attend his toilet and inform him of your arrival. These are your rooms. Dinner will be ready in half an hour. I will call for you as I go down. You can be formally presented in the evening. At that time, inspired by liqueurs and his matchless band of wind instruments, you will agree with the world that Ægiochus is the most finished God in existence."

IV.

"Now, Ixion, are you ready?"

"Even so. What says Jove?"

"He smiled, but said nothing. He was trying on a new robe. By this time he is seated. Hark! the thunder. Come on!"

They entered a cupolaed hall. Seats of ivory and gold were ranged round a circular table of cedar, inlaid with the campaigns against the Titans, in silver exquisitely worked, a nuptial present of Vulcan. The service of gold plate threw all the ideas of the King of Thessaly as to royal magnificence into the darkest shade. The enormous plateau represented the constellations. Ixion viewed the father of Gods and men with great interest, who, however, did not notice him. He acknowledged the majesty of that countenance whose nod shook Olympus. Majestically robust and luxuriantly lusty, his tapering waist was evidently immortal, for it defied Time, and his splendid auburn curls, parted on his forehead with celestial precision, descended over cheeks glowing with the purple radiancy of perpetual manhood.

The haughty Juno was seated on his left hand and Ceres on his right. For the rest of the company there was Neptune, Latona, Minerva, and Apollo, and when Mercury and Ixion had taken their places, one seat was still vacant.

"Where is Diana?" inquired Jupiter, with a frown.

“My sister is hunting,” said Apollo.

“She is always too late for dinner,” said Jupiter. “No habit is less Goddess-like.”

“Godlike pursuits cannot be expected to induce Goddess-like manners,” said Juno, with a sneer.

“I have no doubt Diana will be here directly,” said Latona, mildly.

Jupiter seemed pacified, and at that instant the absent guest returned.

“Good sport, Di?” inquired Neptune.

“Very fair, uncle. Mamma,” continued the sister of Apollo, addressing herself to Juno, whom she ever thus styled when she wished to conciliate her—“I have brought you a new peacock.”

Juno was fond of pets, and was conciliated by the present.

“Bacchus made a great noise about this wine, Mercury,” said Jupiter, “but I think with little cause. What think you?”

“It pleases me, but I am fatigued, and then all wine is agreeable.”

“You have had a long journey,” replied the Thunderer. “Ixion, I am glad to see you in Heaven.”

“Your Majesty arrived to-day?” inquired Minerva, to whom the King of Thessaly sat next.

“Within this hour.”

“You must leave off talking of Time now,” said Minerva, with a severe smile. “Pray is there anything new in Greece?”

“I have not been at all in society lately.”

“No new edition of Homer? I admire him exceedingly.”

“All about Greece interests me,” said Apollo, who, although handsome, was a somewhat melancholy lack-a-daisical looking personage, with his shirt collar thrown open, and his long curls very theatrically arranged. “All about Greece interests me. I always consider Greece my peculiar property. My best poems were written at Delphi. I travelled in Greece when I was very young. I envy mankind.”

“Indeed!” said Ixion.

“Yes: they at least can look forward to a termination of the ennui of existence, but for us Celestials there is no prospect. Say what they like, Immortality is a bore.”

“You eat nothing, Apollo,” said Ceres.

“Nor drink,” said Neptune.

"To eat, to drink, what is it but to live; and what is life but death, if death be that which all men deem it, a thing insufferable, and to be shunned. I refresh myself now only with soda-water and biscuits. Ganymede, give me some."

Now, although the *cuisine* of Olympus was considered perfect, the forlorn poet had unfortunately fixed upon the only two articles which were not comprised in its cellar or larder. In Heaven, there was neither soda-water nor biscuits. A great confusion consequently ensued; but at length the bard, whose love of fame was only equalled by his horror of getting fat, consoled himself with a swan stuffed with truffles, and a bottle of strong Tenedos wine.

"What do you think of Homer?" inquired Minerva of Apollo.

"Is he not delightful?"

"If you think so."

"Nay, I am desirous of your opinion."

"Then you should not have given me yours, for your taste is too fine for me to dare to differ with it."

"I have suspected, for some time, that you are rather a heretic."

"Why, the truth is," replied Apollo, playing with his rings, "I do not think much of Homer. Homer was not esteemed in his own age, and our contemporaries are generally our best judges. The fact is, there are very few people who are qualified to decide upon matters of taste. A certain set, for certain reasons, resolve to cry up a certain writer, and the great mass soon join in. All is cant. And the present admiration of Homer is not less so. They say I have borrowed a great deal from him. The truth is, I never read Homer since I was a child, and I thought of him then what I think of him now, a writer of some wild irregular power, totally deficient in taste. Depend upon it, our contemporaries are our best judges, and his contemporaries decided that Homer was nothing. A great poet cannot be kept down. Look at my case. Marsyas said of my first volume that it was pretty good poetry for a God, and in answer I wrote a satire, and flayed Marsyas alive. But what is poetry, and what is criticism, and what is life? Air. And what is Air? Do you know? I don't. All is mystery, and all is gloom, and ever and anon from out the clouds a star breaks forth, and glitters, and that star is Poetry."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Minerva.

"I do not exactly understand you," said Neptune.

"Have you heard from Proserpine, lately?" inquired Jupiter of Ceres.

"Yesterday," said the domestic mother. "They talk of soon joining us. But Pluto is at present so busy, owing to the amazing quantity of wars going on now, that I am almost afraid he will scarcely be able to accompany her."

Juno exchanged a telegraphic nod with Ceres. The Goddesses rose, and retired.

"Come, old boy," said Jupiter to Ixion, instantly throwing off all his chivalric majesty, "I drink your welcome in a magnum of Maraschino. Damn your poetry, Apollo, and Mercury give us one of your good stories."

V.

"Well! what do you think of him?" asked Juno.

"He appears to have a very fine mind," said Minerva.

"Poh! he has very fine eyes," said Juno.

"He seems a very nice, quiet young gentleman," said Ceres.

"I have no doubt he is very amiable," said Latona.

"He must have felt very strange," said Diana.

VI.

Hercules arrived with his bride Hebe; soon after the Graces dropped in, the most delightful personages in the world for a *soirée*, so useful and ready for anything. Afterwards came a few of the Muses, Thalia, Melpomene, and Terpsichore, famous for a charade or a proverb. Jupiter liked to be amused in the evening. Bacchus also came, but finding that the Gods had not yet left their wine, retired to pay them a previous visit.

VII.

Ganymede announced coffee in the saloon of Juno. Jupiter was in superb good humour. He was amused by his mortal guest. He had condescended to tell one of his best stories in his best style, about Leda, not too scandalous, but gay.

"Those were bright days," said Neptune.

"We can remember," said the Thunderer, with a twinkling eye.

"These youths have fallen upon duller times. There are no fine women now. Ixion, I drink to the health of your wife."

"With all my heart, and may we never be nearer than we are at present."

"Good! i'faith; Apollo, your arm. Now for the ladies. La, la, la, la! la, la, la, la!"

VIII.

The Thunderer entered the saloon of Juno with that bow which no God could rival; all rose, and the King of Heaven seated himself between Ceres and Latona. The melancholy Apollo stood apart, and was soon carried off by Minerva to an assembly at the house of Mnemosyne. Mercury chatted with the Graces, and Bacchus with Diana. The three Muses favoured the company with singing, and the Queen of Heaven approached Ixion.

"Does your Majesty dance?" she haughtily inquired.

"On earth; I have few accomplishments even there, and none in Heaven."

"You have led a strange life! I have heard of your adventures."

"A king who has lost his crown may generally gain at least experience."

"Your courage is firm."

"I have felt too much to care for much. Yesterday I was a vagabond exposed to every pitiless storm, and now I am the guest of Jove. While there is life there is hope, and he who laughs at Destiny will gain Fortune. I would go through the past again to enjoy the present, and feel that, after all, I am my wife's debtor, since, through her conduct, I can gaze upon you."

"No great spectacle. If that be all, I wish you better fortune."

"I desire no greater."

"You are moderate."

"I am perhaps more unreasonable than you imagine."

"Indeed!"

Their eyes met; the dark orbs of the Thessalian did not quail before the flashing vision of the Goddess. Juno grew pale. Juno turned away.

PART II.

"Others say it was only a cloud," &c.—*Vid. Lemprière's Class. Dict., Art. "Ixion."*

I.

MERCURY and Ganymede were each lolling on an opposite couch in the ante-chamber of Olympus.

"It is wonderful," said the son of Maia, yawning.

"It is incredible," rejoined the cup-bearer of Jove, stretching his legs.

"A miserable mortal!" exclaimed the God, elevating his eyebrows.

"A vile Thessalian!" said the beautiful Phrygian, shrugging his shoulders.

"Not three days back an outcast among his own wretched species!"

"And now commanding everybody in Heaven."

"He shall not command me, though," said Mercury.

"Will he not?" replied Ganymede. "Why, what do you think?—only last night—hark! here he comes."

The companions jumped up from their couches—a light laugh was heard. The cedar portal was flung open, and Ixion lounged in, habited in a loose morning robe, and kicking before him one of his slippers.

"Ah!" exclaimed the King of Thessaly, "the very fellows I wanted to see! Ganymede, bring me some nectar; and, Mercury, run and tell Jove that I shall not dine at home to-day."

The messenger and the page exchanged looks of indignant consternation.

"Well! what are you waiting for?" continued Ixion, looking round from the mirror in which he was arranging his locks. The messenger and the page disappeared.

"So! this is Heaven," exclaimed the husband of Dia, flinging himself upon one of the couches, "and a very pleasant place too. These worthy Immortals required their minds to be opened, and I

trust I have effectually performed the necessary operation. They wanted to keep me down with their dull old-fashioned celestial airs, but I fancy I have given them change for their talent. To make your way in Heaven you must command. These exclusives sink under the audacious invention of an aspiring mind. Jove himself is really a fine old fellow, with some notions too. I am a prime favourite, and no one is greater authority with Ægiocbus on all subjects, from the character of the fair sex or the pedigree of a courser, down to the cut of a robe or the flavour of a dish. Thanks, Ganymede," continued the Thessalian, as he took the goblet from his returning attendant.

"I drink to your *bonnes fortunes*. Splendid! This nectar makes me feel quite immortal. By-the-bye, I hear sweet sounds. Who is in the Hall of Music?"

"The Goddesses, royal sir, practise a new air of Euterpe, the words by Apollo. 'Tis pretty, and will doubtless be very popular, for it is all about moonlight and the misery of existence."

"I warrant it."

"You have a taste for poetry yourself?" inquired Ganymede.

"Not the least," replied Ixion.

"Apollo," continued the heavenly page, "is a great genius, though Marsyas said that he never would be a poet because he was a god, and had no heart. But do you think, sir, that a poet does indeed need a heart?"

"I really cannot say. I know my wife always said I had a bad heart and worse head, but what she meant, upon my honour I never could understand."

"Minerva will ask you to write in her album."

"Will she indeed! I am very sorry to hear it, for I can scarcely scrawl my own signature. I should think that Jove himself cared little for all this nonsense."

"Jove loves an epigram. He does not esteem Apollo's works at all. Jove is of the classical school, and admires satire, provided there be no allusions to gods and kings."

"Of course; I quite agree with him. I remember we had a confounded poet at Larissa who proved my family lived before the deluge, and asked me for a pension. I refused him, and then he wrote an epigram asserting that I sprang from the veritable stones thrown by Deucalion and Pyrrha at the re-peopling of the earth, and retained all the properties of my ancestors."

“Ha, ha! Hark! there’s a thunderbolt! I must run to Jove.”

“And I will look in on the musicians. This way, I think.”

“Up the ruby staircase—Turn to your right, down the amethyst gallery—Farewell.”

“Good bye;—a lively lad that!”

II.

The King of Thessaly entered the Hall of Music with its golden walls and crystal dome. The Queen of Heaven was reclining in an easy chair, cutting out peacocks in small sheets of note paper. Minerva was making a pencil observation on a manuscript copy of the song: Apollo listened with deference to her laudatory criticisms. Another divine dame, standing by the side of Euterpe, who was seated by the harp, looked up as Ixion entered. The wild liquid glance of her soft but radiant countenance denoted the famed Goddess of Beauty.

Juno just acknowledged the entrance of Ixion by a slight and very haughty inclination of the head, and then resumed her employment. Minerva asked him his opinion of her amendment, of which he greatly approved. Apollo greeted him with a melancholy smile, and congratulated him on being mortal. Venus complimented him on his visit to Olympus, and expressed the pleasure that she experienced in making his acquaintance.

“What do you think of Heaven?” inquired Venus in a soft still voice, and with a smile like summer lightning.

“I never found it so enchanting as at this moment,” replied Ixion.

“A little dull? For myself, I pass my time chiefly at Cnidos: you must come and visit me there. ’Tis the most charming place in the world. ’Tis said, you know, that our onions are like other people’s roses. We will take care of you, if your wife come.”

“No fear of that. She always remains at home and piques herself on her domestic virtues, which means pickling, and quarrelling with her husband.”

“Ah! I see you are a droll. Very good indeed. Well, for my part, I like a watering-place existence. Cnidos, Paphos, Cythera—you will usually find me at one of these places. I like the easy distraction of a career without any visible result. At these fascinating spots your gloomy race, to whom, by-the-bye, I am

exceedingly partial, appear emancipated from the wearing fetters of their regular, dull, orderly, methodical, moral, political, toiling existence. I pride myself upon being the Goddess of Watering-places. You really must pay me a visit at Cnidos."

"Such an invitation requires no repetition. And Cnidos is your favourite spot?"

"Why, it was so; but of late it has become so inundated with invalid Asiatics and valetudinarian Persians, that the simultaneous influx of the handsome heroes who swarm in from the islands to look after their daughters, scarcely compensates for the annoying presence of their yellow faces, and shaking limbs. No, I think, on the whole, Paphos is my favourite."

"I have heard of its magnificent luxury."

"Oh! 'tis lovely! Quite my idea of country life. Not a single tree! When Cyprus is very hot, you run to Paphos for a sea-breeze, and are sure to meet every one whose presence is in the least desirable. All the bores remain behind, as if by instinct."

"I remember when we married, we talked of passing the honeymoon at Cythera, but Dia would have her waiting-maid and a band-box stuffed between us in the chariot, so I got sulky after the first stage, and returned by myself."

"You were quite right. I hate band-boxes: they are always in the way. You would have liked Cythera if you had been in the least in love. High rocks and green knolls, bowery woods, winding walks, and delicious sunsets. I have not been there much of late," continued the Goddess, looking somewhat sad and serious, "since—but I will not talk sentiment to Ixion."

"Do you think, then, I am insensible?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you are right. We Mortals grow callous."

"So I have heard. How very odd!" So saying, the Goddess glided away and saluted Mars, who at that moment entered the hall. Ixion was presented to the military hero, who looked fierce and bowed stiffly. The King of Thessaly turned upon his heel. Minerva opened her album, and invited him to inscribe a stanza.

"Goddess of Wisdom," replied the King, "unless you inspire me, the virgin page must remain pure as thyself. I can scarcely sign a decree."

"Is it Ixion of Thessaly who says this—one who has seen so

much, and, if I am not mistaken, has felt and thought so much? I can easily conceive why such a mind may desire to veil its movements from the common herd, but pray concede to Minerva the gratifying compliment of assuring her that she is the exception for whom this rule has been established."

"I seem to listen to the inspired music of an oracle. Give me a pen."

"Here is one, plucked from a sacred owl."

"So! I write.—There! Will it do?"

Minerva read the inscription:—

I HAVE SEEN THE WORLD, AND MORE THAN THE WORLD: I HAVE STUDIED THE HEART OF MAN, AND NOW I CONSORT WITH IMMORTALS. THE FRUIT OF MY TREE OF KNOWLEDGE IS PLUCKED, AND IT IS THIS, "*Adventures are to the Adventurous.*"

Written in the Album of Minerva, by

Ixion in Heaven.

"'Tis brief," said the Goddess, with a musing air, "but full of meaning. You have a daring soul and pregnant mind."

"I have dared much: what I may produce we have yet to see."

"I must to Jove," said Minerva, "to council. We shall meet again. Farewell, Ixion."

"Farewell, Glaucopis."

The King of Thessaly stood away from the remaining guests, and leant with folding arms and pensive brow against a wreathed column. Mars listened to Venus with an air of deep devotion. Euterpe played an inspiring accompaniment to their conversation. The Queen of Heaven seemed engrossed in the creation of her paper peacocks.

Ixion advanced and seated himself on a couch near Juno. His manner was divested of that reckless bearing and careless coolness by which it was in general distinguished. He was, perhaps, even a little embarrassed. His ready tongue deserted him. At length he spoke.

"Has your Majesty ever heard of the peacock of the Queen of Mesopotamia?"

"No," replied Juno, with stately reserve; and then she added with an air of indifferent curiosity, "Is it in any way remarkable?"

"Its breast is of silver, its wings of gold, its eyes of carbuncle, its claws of amethyst."

"And its tail?" eagerly inquired Juno.

"That is a secret," replied Ixion. "The tail is the most wonderful part of all."

"Oh! tell me, pray tell me!"

"I forget."

"No, no, no; it is impossible!" exclaimed the animated Juno. "Provoking mortal!" continued the Goddess. "Let me entreat you; tell me immediately."

"There is a reason which prevents me."

"What can it be? How very odd! What reason can it possibly be? Now tell me; as a particular, a personal favour, I request you, do tell me."

"What! The tail or the reason? The tail is wonderful, but the reason is much more so. I can only tell one. Now choose."

"What provoking things these human beings are! The tail is wonderful, but the reason is much more so. Well then, the reason—no, the tail. Stop, now, as a particular favour, pray tell me both. What can the tail be made of, and what can the reason be? I am literally dying of curiosity."

"Your Majesty has cut out that peacock wrong," coolly remarked Ixion. "It is more like one of Minerva's owls."

"Who cares about paper peacocks, when the Queen of Mesopotamia has got such a miracle!" exclaimed Juno; and she tore the labours of the morning to pieces, and threw away the fragments with vexation. "Now tell me instantly—if you have the slightest regard for me, tell me instantly. What was the tail made of?"

"And you do not wish to hear the reason?"

"That afterwards. Now! I am all ears." At this moment Gany-mede entered, and whispered the Goddess, who rose in evident vexation, and retired to the presence of Jove.

III.

The King of Thessaly quitted the Hall of Music. Moody, yet not uninfluenced by a degree of wild excitement, he wandered forth into the gardens of Olympus. He came to a beautiful green retreat surrounded by enormous cedars, so vast that it seemed they must have been coeval with the creation; so fresh and brilliant,

you would have deemed them wet with the dew of their first spring. The turf, softer than down, and exhaling, as you pressed it, an exquisite perfume, invited him to recline himself upon this natural couch. He threw himself upon the aromatic herbage, and leaning on his arm, fell into a deep reverie.

Hours flew away; the sunshiny glades that opened in the distance had softened into shade.

“Ixion, how do you do?” inquired a voice, wild, sweet, and thrilling as a bird. The King of Thessaly started and looked up with the distracted air of a man roused from a dream, or from complacent meditation over some strange, sweet secret. His cheek was flushed—his dark eyes flashed fire; his brow trembled—his dishevelled hair played in the fitful breeze. The King of Thessaly looked up, and beheld a most beautiful youth.

Apparently, he had attained about the age of puberty. His stature, however, was rather tall for his age, but exquisitely moulded and proportioned. Very fair, his somewhat round cheeks were tinged with a rich but delicate glow, like the rose of twilight, and lighted by dimples that twinkled like stars. His large and deep-blue eyes sparkled with exultation, and an air of ill-suppressed mockery quivered round his pouting lips. His light auburn air, braided off his white forehead, clustered in massy curls on each side of his face, and fell in sunny torrents down his neck. And from the back of the beautiful youth there fluttered forth two wings, the tremulous plumage of which seemed to have been bathed in a sunset—so various, so radiant, and so novel were its shifting and wondrous tints;—purple, and crimson, and gold; streaks of azure—dashes of orange and glossy black;—now a single feather, whiter than light, and sparkling like the frost, stars of emerald and carbuncle, and then the prismatic blaze of an enormous brilliant! A quiver hung at the side of the beautiful youth, and he leant upon a bow.

“Oh! god—for god thou must be!” at length exclaimed Ixion. “Do I behold the bright divinity of Love?”

“I am indeed Cupid,” replied the youth; “and am very curious to know what Ixion is thinking about.”

“Thought is often bolder than speech.”

“Oracular, though a mortal! You need not be afraid to trust me. My aid I am sure you must need. Who ever was found in a reverie on the green turf, under the shade of spreading trees,

without requiring the assistance of Cupid? Come! be frank—who is the heroine? Some love-sick nymph deserted on the far earth; or worse, some treacherous mistress, whose frailty is more easily forgotten than her charms? 'Tis a miserable situation, no doubt. It cannot be your wife?"

"Assuredly not," replied Ixion, with great energy.

"Another man's?"

"No."

"What! an obdurate maiden?"

Ixion shook his head.

"It must be a widow, then," continued Cupid. "Who ever heard before of such a piece of work about a widow!"

"Have pity upon me, dread Cupid!" exclaimed the King of Thessaly, rising suddenly from the ground, and falling on his knee before the God. "Thou art the universal friend of man, and all nations alike throw their incense on thy altars. Thy divine discrimination has not deceived thee. I *am* in love;—desperately—madly—fatally enamoured. The object of my passion is neither my own wife nor another man's. In spite of all they have said and sworn, I am a moral member of society. She is neither a maid nor a widow. She is——"

"What? what?" exclaimed the impatient deity.

"A Goddess!" replied the King.

"Wheugh!" whistled Cupid. "What! has my mischievous mother been indulging you with an innocent flirtation?"

"Yes; but it produced no effect upon me."

"You have a stout heart, then. Perhaps you have been reading poetry with Minerva, and are caught in one of her Platonic man-traps."

"She set one, but I broke away."

"You have a stout leg, then. But where are you—where are you? Is it Hebe?—It can hardly be Diana, she is so very cold. Is it a Muse, or is it one of the Graces?"

Ixion again shook his head.

"Come, my dear fellow," said Cupid, quite in a confidential tone, "you have told enough to make further reserve mere affectation. Ease your heart at once, and if I can assist you, depend upon my exertions."

"Beneficent God!" exclaimed Ixion, "if I ever return to Larissa, the brightest temple in Greece shall hail thee for its inspiring

deity. I address thee with all the confiding frankness of a devoted votary. Know, then, the heroine of my reverie was no less a personage than the Queen of Heaven herself!"

"Juno! by all that is sacred!" shouted Cupid.

"I am here," responded a voice of majestic melody. The stately form of the Queen of Heaven advanced from a neighbouring bower. Ixion stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground, with a throbbing heart and burning cheeks. Juno stood motionless, pale, and astounded. The God of Love burst into excessive laughter.

"A pretty pair," he exclaimed, fluttering between both, and laughing in their faces. "Truly a pretty pair. Well! I see I am in your way. Good bye!" And so saying, the God pulled a couple of arrows from his quiver, and with the rapidity of lightning, shot one in the respective breasts of the Queen of Heaven and the King of Thessaly.

IV.

The amethystine twilight of Olympus died away. The stars blazed with tints of every hue. Ixion and Juno returned to the palace. She leant upon his arm;—her eyes were fixed upon the ground;—they were in sight of the gorgeous pile, and yet she had not spoken. Ixion, too, was silent, and gazed with abstraction upon the glowing sky.

Suddenly, when within a hundred yards of the portal, Juno stopped, and looking up into the face of Ixion with an irresistible smile, she said, "I am sure you cannot now refuse to tell me what the Queen of Mesopotamia's peacock's tail was made of?"

"It is impossible now," said Ixion. "Know, then, beautiful Goddess, that the tail of the Queen of Mesopotamia's peacock was made of some plumage she had stolen from the wings of Cupid."

"And what was the reason that prevented you from telling me before?"

"Because, beautiful Juno, I am the most discreet of men, and respect the secret of a lady, however trifling."

"I am glad to hear that," replied Juno, and they re-entered the palace.

V.

Mercury met Juno and Ixion in the gallery leading to the grand banqueting hall.

"I was looking for you," said the God, shaking his head. "Jove is in a sublime rage. Dinner has been ready this hour."

The King of Thessaly and the Queen of Heaven exchanged a glance and entered the saloon. Jove looked up with a brow of thunder, but did not condescend to send forth a single flash of anger. Jove looked up and Jove looked down. All Olympus trembled as the father of Gods and men resumed his soup. The rest of the guests seemed nervous and reserved, except Cupid, who said immediately to Juno, "Your Majesty has been detained?"

"I fell asleep in a bower reading Apollo's last poem," replied Juno. "I am lucky, however, in finding a companion in my negligence. Ixion, where have you been?"

"Take a glass of nectar, Juno," said Cupid, with eyes twinkling with mischief; "and perhaps Ixion will join us."

This was the most solemn banquet ever celebrated in Olympus. Every one seemed out of humour or out of spirits. Jupiter spoke only in monosyllables of suppressed rage, that sounded like distant thunder.

Apollo whispered to Minerva. Mercury never opened his lips, but occasionally exchanged significant glances with Ganymede. Mars compensated, by his attentions to Venus, for his want of conversation. Cupid employed himself in asking disagreeable questions. At length the goddesses retired. Mercury exerted himself to amuse Jove, but the Thunderer scarcely deigned to smile at his best stories. Mars picked his teeth,—Apollo played with his rings,—Ixion was buried in a profound reverie.

VI.

It was a great relief to all when Ganymede summoned them to the presence of their late companions.

"I have written a comment upon your inscription," said Minerva to Ixion, "and am anxious for your opinion of it."

"I am a wretched critic," said the King, breaking away from her. Juno smiled upon him in the distance.

"Ixion," said Venus, as he passed by, "come and talk to me."

The bold Thessalian blushed, he stammered out an unmeaning excuse, he quitted the astonished but good-natured Goddess, and seated himself by Juno, and, as he seated himself, his moody brow seemed suddenly illumined with brilliant light.

"Is it so?" said Venus.

"Hem!" said Minerva.

"Ha, ha!" said Cupid.

Jupiter played piquette with Mercury.

"Everything goes wrong to-day," said the King of Heaven; "cards wretched, and kept waiting for dinner, and by——a mortal!"

"Your Majesty must not be surprised," said the good-natured Mercury, with whom Ixion was no favourite. "Your Majesty must not be very much surprised at the conduct of this creature. Considering what he is, and where he is, I am only astonished that his head is not more turned than it appears to be. A man, a thing made of mud, and in Heaven! Only think, sire! Is it not enough to inflame the brain of any child of clay? To be sure, keeping your Majesty from dinner is little short of celestial high treason. I hardly expected that, indeed. To order me about, to treat Ganymede as his own lacquey, and, in short, to command the whole household; all this might be expected from such a person in such a situation, but I confess I did think he had some little respect left for your Majesty."

"And he does order you about, eh?" inquired Jove. "I have the spades."

"Oh! 'tis quite ludicrous," responded the son of Maia. "Your Majesty would not expect from me the offices that this absurd up-start daily requires."

"Eternal destiny! is't possible? That is my trick. And Ganymede, too?"

"Oh! quite shocking, I assure you, sire," said the beautiful cup-bearer, leaning over the chair of Jove, with all the easy insolence of a privileged favourite. "Really, sire, if Ixion is to go on in the way he does, either he or I must quit."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Jupiter. "But I can believe anything of a man who keeps me waiting for dinner. Two and three make five."

"It is Juno that encourages him so," said Ganymede.

"Does she encourage him?" inquired Jove.

"Everybody notices it," protested Ganymede.

"It is indeed a little noticed," observed Mercury.

"What business has such a fellow to speak to Juno?" exclaimed Jove. "A mere mortal, a mere miserable mortal! You have the point. How I have been deceived in this fellow! Who ever could have supposed that, after all my generosity to him, he would ever have kept me waiting for dinner?"

"He was walking with Juno," said Ganymede. "It was all a sham about their having met by accident. Cupid saw them."

"Hah!" said Jupiter, turning pale; "you don't say so! Repiqued, as I am a God. That is mine. Where is the Queen?"

"Talking to Ixion, sire," said Mercury. "Oh, I beg your pardon, sire; I did not know you meant the queen of diamonds."

"Never mind. I am repiqued, and I have been kept waiting for dinner. Accursed be this day! Is Ixion really talking to Juno? We will not endure this."

VII.

"Where is Juno?" demanded Jupiter.

"I am sure I cannot say," said Venus with a smile.

"I am sure I do not know," said Minerva, with a sneer.

"Where is Ixion?" said Cupid, laughing outright.

"Mercury, Ganymede, find the Queen of Heaven instantly," thundered the father of Gods and men.

The celestial messenger and the heavenly page flew away out of different doors. There was a terrible, an immortal silence. Sublime rage lowered on the brow of Jove like a storm upon the mountain top. Minerva seated herself at the card-table and played at Patience. Venus and Cupid tittered in the back-ground. Shortly returned the envoys, Mercury looking very solemn, Ganymede very malignant.

"Well?" inquired Jove; and all Olympus trembled at the monosyllable.

Mercury shook his head.

"Her Majesty has been walking on the terrace with the King of Thessaly," replied Ganymede.

"Where is she now, sir?" demanded Jupiter.

Mercury shrugged his shoulders.

“Her Majesty is resting herself in the pavilion of Cupid, with the King of Thessaly,” replied Ganymede.

“Confusion!” exclaimed the father of Gods and men; and he rose and seized a candle from the table, scattering the cards in all directions. Every one present, Minerva and Venus, and Mars and Apollo, and Mercury and Ganymede, and the Muses, and the Graces, and all the winged Genii,—each seized a candle; rifling the chandeliers, each followed Jove.

“This way,” said Mercury.

“This way,” said Ganymede.

“This way, this way!” echoed the celestial crowd.

“Mischief!” cried Cupid, “I must save my victims.”

They were all upon the terrace. The father of Gods and men, though both in a passion and a hurry, moved with dignity. It was, as customary in Heaven, a clear and starry night; but this eve Diana was indisposed, or otherwise engaged, and there was no moonlight. They were in sight of the pavilion.

“What are you?” inquired Cupid of one of the genii, who accidentally extinguished his candle.

“I am a Cloud,” answered the winged genius.

“A Cloud! Just the thing. Now do me a shrewd turn, and Cupid is ever your debtor. Fly, fly, pretty Cloud, and encompass yon pavilion with your form. Away! ask no questions;—swift as my word.”

“I declare there is a fog,” said Venus.

“An evening mist in Heaven!” said Minerva.

“Where is Nox?” said Jove. “Everything goes wrong. Who ever heard of a mist in Heaven?”

“My candle is out,” said Apollo.

“And mine too,” said Mars.

“And mine,—and mine,—and mine,” said Mercury and Ganymede, and the Muses and the Graces.

“All the candles are out!” said Cupid; “a regular fog. I cannot even see the pavilion: it must be hereabouts, though,” said the God to himself. “So, so; I should be at home in my own pavilion, and am tolerably accustomed to stealing about in the dark. There is a step; and here, surely here is the lock. The door opens, but the Cloud enters before me. Juno, Juno,” whispered the God of Love, “we are all here. Be contented to escape, like many other

innocent dames, with your reputation only under a cloud: it will soon disperse; and lo! the heaven is clearing."

"It must have been the heat of our flambeaux," said Venus; "for see, the mist is vanished; here is the pavilion."

Ganymede ran forward, and dashed open the door. Ixion was alone.

"Seize him!" said Jove.

"Juno is not here," said Mercury, with an air of blended congratulation and disappointment.

"Never mind," said Jove, "seize him! He kept me waiting for dinner."

"Is this your hospitality, *Ægiochus*?" exclaimed Ixion, in a tone of bullying innocence. "I shall defend myself."

"Seize him, seize him!" exclaimed Jupiter. "What! do you all falter? Are you afraid of a mortal?"

"And a Thessalian?" added Ganymede.

No one advanced.

"Send for Hercules," said Jove.

"I will fetch him in an instant," said Ganymede.

"I protest," said the King of Thessaly, "against this violation of the most sacred rights."

"The marriage tie?" said Mercury.

"The dinner-hour?" said Jove.

"It is no use talking sentiment to Ixion," said Venus; "all mortals are callous."

"Adventures are to the adventurous," said Minerva.

"Here is Hercules!—here is Hercules!"

"Seize him!" said Jove; "seize that man."

In vain the mortal struggled with the irresistible demi-god.

"Shall I fetch your thunderbolt, Jove?" inquired Ganymede.

"Anything short of eternal punishment is unworthy of a God," answered Jupiter, with great dignity. "Apollo, bring me a wheel of your chariot."

"What shall I do to-morrow morning?" inquired the God of Light.

"Order an eclipse," replied Jove. "Bind the insolent wretch to the wheel; hurl him to Hades; its motion shall be perpetual."

"What am I to bind him with?" inquired Hercules.

"The girdle of Venus," replied the Thunderer.

"What is all this?" inquired Juno, advancing, pale and agitated.

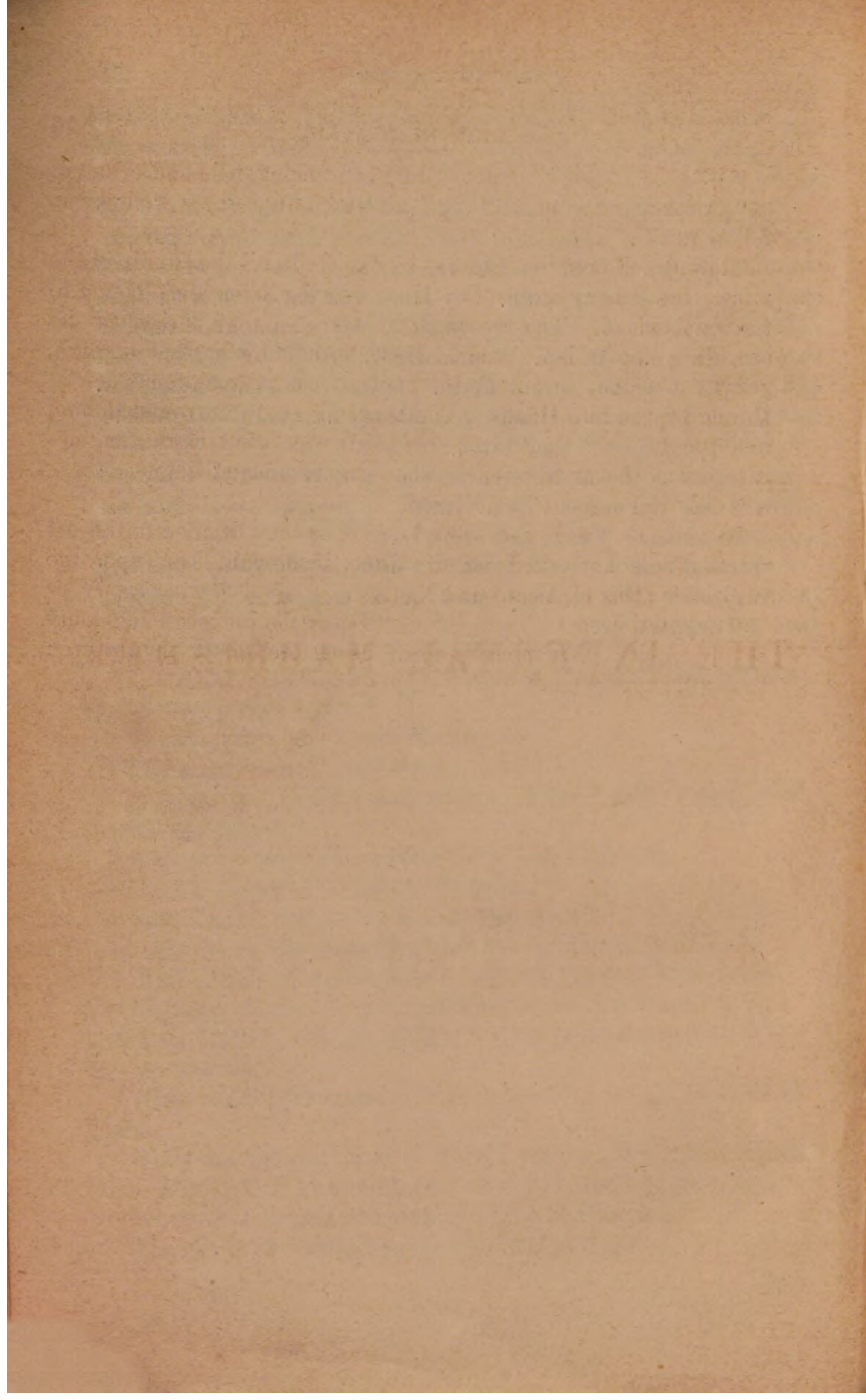
"Come along, you shall see," answered Jupiter. "Follow me, follow me."

They all followed the leader,—all the Gods, all the Genii; in the midst, the brawny husband of Hebe bearing Ixion aloft, bound to the fatal wheel. They reached the terrace; they descended the sparkling steps of lapis-lazuli. Hercules held his burthen on high, ready, at a nod, to plunge the hapless, but presumptuous mortal through space into Hades. The heavenly group surrounded him, and peeped over the starry abyss. It was a fine moral, and demonstrated the usual infelicity that attends unequal connections.

"Celestial despot!" said Ixion.

In a moment all sounds were hushed, as they listened to the last words of the unrivalled victim. Juno, in despair, leant upon the respective arms of Venus and Minerva.

"Celestial despot!" said Ixion, "I defy the immortal ingenuity of thy cruelty. My memory must be as eternal as thy torture: that will support me."



THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE.

" Proserpine was the daughter of Jupiter and Ceres. Pluto, the God of Hell, became enamoured of her. His addresses were favoured by her father, but opposed by Ceres. Under these circumstances, he surprised her on the plains of Enna, and carried her off in his chariot " &c. &c.

THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE.

PART I.

I.

It was clearly a runaway match—never indeed was such a sublime elopement. The four horses were coal-black, with blood-red manes and tails; and they were shod with rubies. They were harnessed to a basaltic car by a single rein of flame. Waving his double-pronged trident in the air, the God struck the blue breast of Cyane, and the waters instantly parted. In rushed the wild chariot, the pale and insensible Proserpine clinging to the breast of her grim lover.

Through the depths of the hitherto unfathomed lake, the infernal steeds held their breathless course. The car jolted against its bed. "Save me!" exclaimed the future Queen of Hades, and she clung with renewed energy to the bosom of the dark bridegroom. The earth opened; they entered the kingdom of the Gnomes. Here Pluto was popular. The lurid populace gave him a loud shout. The chariot whirled along through shadowy cities, and by dim highways, swarming with a busy race of shades.

"Ye flowery meads of Enna!" exclaimed the terrified Proserpine, "shall I never view you again? What an execrable climate!"

"Here however, in-door nature is charming," responded Pluto. "'Tis a great nation of manufacturers. You are better, I hope, my Proserpine. The passage of the water is never very agreeable, especially to ladies."

"And which is our next stage?" inquired Proserpine.

"The centre of Earth," replied Pluto. "Travelling is so much improved, that at this rate we shall reach Hades before night."

"Alas!" exclaimed Proserpine, "is not this night?"

"You are not unhappy, my Proserpine?"

"Beloved of my heart, I have given up everything for you; I don't repent, but I am thinking of my mother."

"Time will pacify the Lady Ceres. What is done cannot be undone. In the winter, when a residence among us is even desirable, I should not be surprised were she to pay us a visit."

"Her prejudices are so strong," murmured the bride. "Oh! my Pluto, I hope your family will be kind to me."

"Who could be unkind to Proserpine? Ours is a very domestic circle. I can assure you that everything is so well ordered among us, that I have no recollection of a domestic broil."

"But marriage is such a revolution in a bachelor's establishment," replied Proserpine, despondingly. "To tell you the truth, too, I am half-frightened at the thought of the Furies. I have heard that their tempers are so very violent."

"They mean well; their feelings are strong, but their hearts are in the right place. I flatter myself you will like my nieces, the Parcæ. They are very accomplished, and great favourites among the men."

"Indeed!"

"Oh! quite irresistible."

"My heart misgives me. I wish you had at least paid them the compliment of apprising them of our marriage."

"Cheer up. For myself, I have none but pleasant anticipations. I long to be at home, once more by my own fire-side, and patting my faithful Cerberus."

"I think I shall like Cerberus—I am fond of dogs."

"I am sure you will. He is the most faithful creature in the world."

"Is he very fierce?"

"Not if he takes a fancy to you; and who can help taking a fancy to Proserpine?"

"Ah! my Pluto, you are in love."

II.

"Is this Hades?" inquired Proserpine.

An avenue of colossal bulls, sculptured in basalt, and breathing living flame, led to gates of brass, adorned with friezes of rubies, representing the wars and discomfiture of the Titans. A crimson

cloud concealed the height of the immense portal, and on either side hovered o'er the extending walls of the city; a watch-tower or a battlement occasionally flashing forth, and forcing their forms through the lurid obscurity.

"Queen of Hades! welcome to your capital!" exclaimed Pluto.

The monarch rose in his car, and whirled a javelin at the gates. There was an awful clang; and then a still more terrible growl.

"My faithful Cerberus!" exclaimed the King.

The portals flew open, and revealed the gigantic form of the celebrated watch-dog of Hell. It completely filled their wide expanse. Who but Pluto could have viewed without horror that enormous body covered with shaggy spikes, those frightful paws clothed with claws of steel, that tail like a boa constrictor, those fiery eyes that blazed like the blood-red lamps in a pharos, and those three forked tongues, round each of which were entwined a vigorous family of green rattlesnakes!

"Ah! Cerby! Cerby!" exclaimed Pluto; "my fond and faithful Cerby!"

Proserpine screamed as the animal gambolled up to the side of the chariot, and held out its paw to its master. Then licking the royal palm with its three tongues at once, it renewed its station with a wag of its tail, which raised such a cloud of dust that for a few minutes nothing was perceptible.

"The monster!" exclaimed Proserpine.

"My love!" exclaimed Pluto, with astonishment.

"The hideous brute!"

"My dear!" exclaimed Pluto.

"He shall never touch me."

"Proserpine!"

"Don't touch me with that hand. You never shall touch me, if you allow that disgusting animal to lick your hand."

"I beg to inform you that there are few beings of any kind for whom I have a greater esteem than that faithful and affectionate beast."

"Oh! if you like Cerberus better than me, I have no more to say," exclaimed the bride, bridling up with great indignation.

"My Proserpine is perverse," replied Pluto; "her memory has scarcely done me justice."

"I am sure you said you liked Cerberus better than anything in

the world," continued the Goddess, with a voice trembling with passion.

"I said no such thing," replied Pluto, somewhat sternly.

"I see how it is," replied Proserpine, with a sob, "you are tired of me."

"My beloved!"

"I never expected this."

"My child!"

"Was it for this I left my mother?"

"Powers of Hades! How you can say such things!"

"Broke her heart?"

"Proserpine! Proserpine!"

"Gave up daylight?"

"For the sake of Heaven, then, calm yourself!"

"Sacrificed everything?"

"My love! my life! my angel! what is all this?"

"And then to be abused for the sake of a dog?"

"By all the shades of Hell, but this is enough to provoke even immortals. What have I done, said, or thought, to justify such treatment?"

"Oh! me!"

"Proserpine!"

"Heigho!"

"Proserpine! Proserpine!"

"So soon is the veil withdrawn!"

"Dearest, you must be unwell. This journey has been too much for you."

"On our very bridal day to be so treated!"

"Soul of my existence, don't make me mad. I love you,—I adore you,—I have no hope, no wish, no thought but you. I swear it,—I swear it by my sceptre and my throne. Speak, speak to your Pluto: tell him all your wish, all your desire. What would you have me do?"

"Shoot that horrid beast."

"Ah! me!"

"What, you will not! I thought how it would be. I am Proserpine,—your beloved, adored Proserpine. You have no wish, no hope, no thought, but for me! I have only to speak, and what I desire will be instantly done! And I do speak,—I tell you my

wish,—I express to you my desire,—and I am instantly refused! And what have I requested? Is it such a mighty favour? Is it anything unreasonable? Is there, indeed, in my entreaty anything so vastly out of the way? The death of a dog, a disgusting animal, which has already shaken my nerves to pieces;—and if ever—(here she hid her face in his breast)—if ever that event should occur, which both must desire, my Pluto, I am sure the very sight of that horrible beast will—I dare not say what it will do.”

Pluto looked very puzzled.

“Indeed, my Proserpine, it is not in my power to grant your request; for Cerberus is immortal, like ourselves.”

“Me! miserable!”

“Some arrangement, however, may be made to keep him out of your sight and hearing. I can banish him.”

“Can you, indeed? Oh! banish him, my Pluto! pray banish him! I never shall be happy until Cerberus is banished.”

“I will do anything you desire; but I confess to you, I have some misgivings. He is an invaluable watch-dog; and I fear, without his superintendence, the guardians of the gate will scarcely do their duty.”

“Oh! yes: I am sure they will, my Pluto! I will ask them to—I will ask them myself—I will request them, as a very particular and personal favour to myself, to be very careful indeed. And if they do their duty, and I am sure they will, they shall be styled, as a reward, ‘Proserpine’s Own Guards.’”

“A reward, indeed!” said the enamoured monarch, as, with a sigh, he signed the order for the banishment of Cerberus in the form of his promotion to the office of Master of the royal and imperial blood-hounds.

III.

The burning waves of Phlegethon assumed a lighter hue. It was morning. It was the morning after the arrival of Pluto and his unexpected bride. In one of the principal rooms of the palace three beautiful females, clothed in cerulean robes spangled with stars, and their heads adorned with golden crowns, were at work together. One held a distaff, from which the second spun; and the third wielded an enormous pair of adamantine shears, with which she perpetually severed the labours of her sisters. Tall

were they in stature, and beautiful in form. Very fair; an expression of haughty serenity pervaded their majestic countenances. Their three companions, however, though apparently of the same sex, were of a very different character. If women can ever be ugly, certainly these three ladies might put in a valid claim to that epithet. Their complexions were very dark and withered, and their eyes, though bright, were bloodshot. Scantily clothed in black garments, not unstained with gore, their wan and offensive forms were but slightly veiled. Their hands were talons; their feet cloven; and serpents were wreathed round their brows instead of hair. Their restless and agitated carriage afforded also not less striking contrast to the highly polished and aristocratic demeanour of their companions. They paced the chamber with hurried and unequal steps, and wild and uncouth gestures; waving, with a reckless ferocity, burning torches and whips of scorpions. It is hardly necessary for me to add that these were the Furies, and that the conversation, which I am about to report, was carried on with the Fates.

"A thousand serpents!" shrieked Tisiphone. "I will never believe it."

"Racks and flames!" squeaked Megæra. "It is impossible."

"Eternal torture!" moaned Alecto. "'Tis a lie."

"Not Jupiter himself should convince us!" the Furies joined in infernal chorus.

"'Tis nevertheless, true," calmly observed the beautiful Clotho.

"You will soon have the honour of being presented to her," added the serene Lachesis.

"And whatever we may feel," observed the considerate Atropos, "I think, my dear girls, you had better restrain yourselves."

"And what sort of thing is she?" inquired Tisiphone, with a shriek.

"I have heard that she is very lovely," answered Clotho. "Indeed, it is impossible to account for the affair in any other way."

"'Tis neither possible to account for, nor to justify it," squeaked Megæra.

"Is there, indeed, a Queen in Hell?" moaned Alecto.

"We shall hold no more drawing-rooms," said Lachesis.

"We will never attend hers," said the Furies.

"You must," replied the Fates.

"I have no doubt she will give herself airs," shrieked Tisiphone.

"We must remember where she has been brought up, and be considerate," replied Lachesis.

"I dare say you three will get on very well with her," squeaked Megæra. "You always get on well with people."

"We must remember how very strange things here must appear to her," observed Atropos.

"No one can deny that there are some very disagreeable sights," said Clotho.

"There is something in that," replied Tisiphone, looking in the glass, and arranging her serpents; "and for my part, poor girl, I almost pity her, when I think she will have to visit the Harpies."

IV.

At this moment four little pages entered the room, who, without exception, were the most hideous dwarfs that ever attended upon a monarch. They were clothed only in parti-coloured tunics, and their breasts and legs were quite bare. From the countenance of the first you would have supposed he was in a convulsion; his hands were clenched and his hair stood an end—this was Terror! The protruded veins of the second seemed ready to burst, and his rubicund visage decidedly proved that he had blood in his head—this was Rage! The third was of an ashen colour throughout—this was Paleness! And the fourth, with a countenance not without traces of beauty, was even more disgusting than his companions from the quantity of horrible flies, centipedes, snails, and other noisome, slimy and indescribable monstrosities that were crawling all about his body and feeding on his decaying features. The name of this fourth page was Death!

"The King and Queen!" announced the Pages.

Pluto, during the night, had prepared Proserpine for the worst, and had endeavoured to persuade her that his love would ever compensate for all annoyances. She was in excellent spirits and in very good humour; therefore, though she could with difficulty stifle a scream when she recognised the Furies, she received the congratulations of the Parcæ with much cordiality.

"I have the pleasure, Proserpine, of presenting you to my family," said Pluto.

"Who, I am sure, hope to make Hades agreeable to your M

jesty," rejoined Clotho. The Furies uttered a suppressed sound between a murmur and a growl.

"I have ordered the chariot," said Pluto. "I propose to take the Queen a ride, and show her some of our lions."

"She will, I am sure, be delighted," said Lachesis.

"I long to see Ixion," said Proserpine.

"The wretch!" shrieked Tisiphone.

"I cannot help thinking that he has been very unfairly treated," said Proserpine.

"What!" squeaked Megæra. "The ravisher!"

"Ay! it is all very well," replied Proserpine; "but, for my part, if we knew the truth of that affair——"

"Is it possible that your Majesty can speak in such a tone of levity of such an offender?" shrieked Tisiphone.

"Is it possible?" moaned Alecto.

"Ah! you have heard only one side of the question; but for my part, knowing as much of Juno as I do——"

"The Queen of Heaven!" observed Atropos, with an intimating glance.

"The Queen of Fiddlestick!" said Proserpine, "as great a flirt as ever existed, with all her prudish looks."

The Fates and the Furies exchanged glances of astonishment and horror.

"For my part," continued Proserpine, "I make it a rule to support the weaker side, and nothing will ever persuade me that Ixion is not a victim, and a pitiable one."

"Well! men generally have the best of it in these affairs," said Lachesis, with a forced smile.

"Juno ought to be ashamed of herself," said Proserpine. "Had I been in her situation, they should have tied me to a wheel first. At any rate they ought to have punished him in Heaven. I have no idea of those people sending every *mauvais sujet* to Hell."

"But what shall we do?" inquired Pluto, who wished to turn the conversation.

"Shall we turn out a sinner and hunt him for her Majesty's diversion?" suggested Tisiphone, flanking her serpents.

"Nothing of the kind will ever divert me," said Proserpine; "for I have no hesitation in saying, that I do not at all approve of these eternal punishments, or, indeed, of any punishment whatever."

“The heretic!” whispered Tisiphone to Megæra. Alecto moaned.

“It might be more interesting to her Majesty,” said Atropos, “to witness some of those extraordinary instances of predestined misery with which Hades abounds. Shall we visit Œdipus?”

“Poor fellow!” exclaimed Proserpine. “For myself, I willingly confess that Torture disgusts and Destiny puzzles me.”

The Fates and the Furies all alike started.

“I do not understand this riddle of Destiny,” continued the young Queen. “If you, Parcæ, have predestined that a man should commit a crime, it appears to me very unjust that you should afterwards call upon the Furies to punish him for its commission.”

“But man is a free agent,” observed Lachesis, in as mild a tone as she could command.

“Then what becomes of Destiny?” replied Proserpine.

“Destiny is eternal and irresistible,” replied Clotho. “All is ordained; but man is, nevertheless, master of his own actions.”

“I do not understand that,” said Proserpine.

“It is not meant to be understood,” said Atropos; “but you must nevertheless believe it.”

“I make it a rule only to believe what I understand,” replied Proserpine.

“It appears,” said Lachesis, with a blended glance of contempt and vengeance, “that your Majesty, though a Goddess, is an Atheist.”

“As for that, anybody may call me just what they please, provided they do nothing else. So long as I am not tied to a wheel or whipped with scorpions for speaking my mind, I shall be as tolerant of the speech and acts of others, as I expect them to be tolerant of mine. Come, Pluto, I am sure that the chariot must be ready!”

So saying, her Majesty took the arm of her spouse, and with a haughty curtsy, left the apartment.

“Did you ever!” shrieked Tisiphone, as the door closed.

“No! never!” squeaked Megæra.

“Never! never!” moaned Alecto.

“She must understand what she believes, must she?” said Lachesis, scarcely less irritated.

“I never heard such nonsense,” said Clotho,

"What next!" said Atropos.

"Disgusted with Torture!" exclaimed the Furies.

"Puzzled with Destiny!" said the Fates.

V.

It was the third morning after the Infernal Marriage; the slumbering Proserpine reposed in the arms of the snoring Pluto. There was a loud knocking at the chamber-door. Pluto jumped up in the middle of a dream.

"My life, what is the matter?" exclaimed Proserpine.

The knocking was repeated and increased. There was also a loud shout of Treason, Murder, and Fire!

"What is the matter?" exclaimed the God, jumping out of bed, and seizing his trident. "Who is there?"

"Your pages, your faithful pages! Treason! treason! For the sake of Hell open the door. Murder, fire, treason!"

"Enter!" said Pluto, as the door was unlocked.

And Terror and Rage entered.

"You frightful things, get out of the room!" cried Proserpine.

"A moment, my angel!" said Pluto, "a single moment. Be not alarmed, my best love—I pray you be not alarmed. Well, imps, why am I disturbed?"

"Oh!" said Terror. Rage could not speak, but gnashed his teeth, and stamped his feet.

"O-o-o-h!" repeated Terror.

"Speak, cursed imps!" cried the enraged Pluto; and he raised his arm.

"A man! a man!" cried Terror. "Treason, treason!—a man! a man!"

"What man?" said Pluto, in a rage.

"A man, a live man, has entered Hell!"

"You don't say so?" said Proserpine: "a man, a live man. Let me see him immediately."

"Where is he?" said Pluto; "what is he doing?"

"He is here, there, and everywhere! asking for your wife, and singing like anything."

"Proserpine!" said Pluto, reproachfully; but, to do the God justice, he was more astounded than jealous.

"I am sure I shall be delighted to see him; it is so long since I

have seen a live man," said Proserpine. "Who can he be? A man, and a live man! How delightful! It must be a messenger from my mother."

"But how came he here?"

"Ah! how came he here?" echoed Terror.

"No time must be lost!" exclaimed Pluto, scrambling on his robe. "Seize him, and bring him into the Council Chamber. My charming Proserpine, excuse me for a moment."

"Not at all, I will accompany you."

"But, my love, my sweetest, my own, this is business; these are affairs of state. The Council Chamber is not a place for you."

"And why not?" said Proserpine; "I have no idea of ever leaving you for a moment. Why not for me as well as for the Fates and the Furies? Am I not Queen? I have no idea of such nonsense!"

"My love!" said the deprecating husband.

"You don't go without me," said the imperious wife, seizing his robe.

"I must," said Pluto.

"Then you shall never return," said Proserpine.

"Enchantress! be reasonable."

"I never was, and I never will be," replied the Goddess.

"Treason! treason!" screamed Terror.

"My love, I must go!"

"Pluto," said Proserpine, "understand me once for all, I will not be contradicted."

Rage stamped his foot.

"Proserpine, understand me once for all,—it is impossible," said the God, frowning.

"My Pluto!" said the Queen. "Is it my Pluto who speaks thus sternly to me? Is it he who, but an hour ago, a short hour ago, died upon my bosom in transports and stifled me with kisses Unhappy woman! wretched, miserable Proserpine! Oh! my mother! my kind, my affectionate mother! Have I disobeyed you for this! For this have I deserted you! For this have I broken your beloved heart!" She buried her face in the crimson counterpane, and bedewed its gorgeous embroidery with her fast-flowing tears.

"Treason!" shouted Terror.

"Hah! hah! hah!" exclaimed the hysterical Proserpine.

"What am I to do?" cried Pluto. "Proserpine, my adored, my beloved, my enchanting Proserpine, compose yourself,—for my sake, compose yourself. I love you! I adore you! You know it! oh! indeed you know it!"

The hysterics increased.

"Treason! treason!" shouted Terror.

"Hold your infernal tongue," said Pluto. "What do I care for treason when the Queen is in this state?" He knelt by the bedside, and tried to stop her mouth with kisses, and ever and anon whispered his passion. "My Proserpine, I beseech you be calm, I will do anything you like. Come, come, then, to the Council!"

The hysterics ceased; the Queen clasped him in her arms and rewarded him with a thousand embraces. Then, jumping up, she bathed her swollen eyes with a beautiful cosmetic that she and her maidens had distilled from the flowers of Enna; and wrapping herself up in her shawl, descended with his Majesty, who was quite as much puzzled about the cause of this disturbance as when he was first roused.

VI.

Crossing an immense covered bridge, the origin of the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, over the royal gardens, which consisted entirely of cypress, the royal pair, preceded by the pages in waiting, entered the Council Chamber. The council was already assembled. On either side of a throne of sulphur—from which issued the four infernal rivers of Lethe, Phlegethon, Cocytus, and Acheron—were ranged the Eumenides and the Parcæ. Lachesis and her sisters turned up their noses when they observed Proserpine; but the Eumenides could not stifle their fury, in spite of the hints of their more subdued, but not less malignant, companions.

"What is all this?" inquired Pluto.

"The constitution is in danger," said the Parcæ in chorus.

"Both in church and state," added the Furies. "'Tis a case of treason and blasphemy;" and they waved their torches and shook their whips with delighted anticipation of their use.

"Detail the circumstances," said Pluto, waving his hand majestically to Lachesis, in whose good sense he had great confidence.

"A man—a living man—has entered your kingdom, unknown and unnoticed," said Lachesis.

"By my sceptre, is it true?" said the astonished King. "Is he seized?"

"The extraordinary mortal baffles our efforts," said Lachesis. "He bears with him a lyre, the charmed gift of Apollo, and so seducing are his strains, that in vain our guards advance to arrest his course; they immediately begin dancing, and he easily eludes their efforts. The general confusion is indescribable. All business is at a standstill: Ixion rests upon his wheel; old Sisyphus very coolly sits down on his mountain, and his stone has fallen with a terrible splash into Acheron. In short, unless we are energetic, we are on the eve of a revolution."

"His purpose?"

"He seeks yourself, and——her Majesty," added Lachesis, with a sneer.

"Immediately announce that we will receive him."

The unexpected guest was not slow in acknowledging the royal summons. A hasty treaty was drawn up; he was to enter the palace unmolested, on condition that he ceased playing his lyre. The Fates and the Furies exchanged significant glances as his approach was announced.

The man, the live man, who had committed the unprecedented crime of entering Hell without a licence, and the previous deposit of his soul as security for the good behaviour of his body, stood before the surprised and indignant Court of Hades. Tall and graceful in stature, and crowned with laurels, Proserpine was glad to observe that the man, who was evidently famous, was also very good-looking.

"Thy purpose, mortal?" inquired Pluto, with awful majesty.

"Mercy!" answered the stranger in a voice of exquisite melody, and sufficiently embarrassed to render him interesting.

"What is mercy?" inquired the Fates and the Furies.

"Speak, stranger, without fear," said Proserpine. "Thy name?"

"Is Orpheus; but a few days back the too happy husband of the enchanting Eurydice. Alas! dread King, and thou too, beautiful and benignant partner of his throne, I won her by my lyre, and by my lyre I would redeem her. Know, then, that in the very glow of our gratified passion a serpent crept under the flowers on which we reposed, and by a fatal sting summoned my adored to the shades. Why did it not also summon me? I will not say why

should I not have been the victim in her stead; for I feel too keenly that the doom of Eurydice would not have been less forlorn, had she been the wretched being who had been spared to life. O King! they whispered on earth that thou too hadst yielded thy heart to the charms of love. Pluto, they whispered, is no longer stern—Pluto also feels the all-subduing influence of beauty. Dread monarch, by the self-same passion that rages in our breasts alike, I implore thy mercy. Thou hast risen from the couch of love—the arm of thy adored has pressed upon thy heart—her honied lips have clung with rapture to thine—still echo in thy ears all the enchanting phrases of her idolatry. Then, by the memory of these—by all the higher and ineffable joys to which these lead, King of Hades, spare me, oh! spare me, Eurydice!”

Proserpine threw her arms round the neck of her husband, and hiding her face in his breast, wept.

“Rash mortal, you demand that which is not in the power of Pluto to concede,” said Lachesis.

“I have heard much of treason since my entrance into Hades,” replied Orpheus, “and this sounds like it.”

“Mortal!” exclaimed Clotho, with contempt.

“Nor is it in your power to return, sir,” said Tisiphone, shaking her whip.

“We have accounts to settle with you,” said Megæra.

“Spare her, spare her,” murmured Proserpine to her lover.

“King of Hades!” said Lachesis, with much dignity, “I hold a responsible office in your realm, and I claim the constitutional privilege of your attention. I protest against the undue influence of the Queen. She is a power unknown in our constitution, and an irresponsible agent that I will not recognise. Let her go back to the drawing-room, where all will bow to her.”

“Hag!” exclaimed Proserpine. “King of Hades, I too can appeal to you. Have I accepted your crown to be insulted by your subjects?”

“A subject, may it please your Majesty, who has duties as strictly defined by our infernal constitution as those of your royal spouse; duties, too, which let me tell you, Madam, I and *my order* are resolved to perform.”

“Gods of Olympus!” cried Proserpine. “Is this to be a Queen?”

“Before we proceed further in this discussion,” said Lachesis,

"I must move an inquiry into the conduct of his Excellency the Governor of the Gates. I move then that Cerberus be summoned."

Pluto started, and the blood rose to his dark cheek. "I have not yet had an opportunity of mentioning," said his Majesty, in a low tone, and with an air of considerable confusion, "that I have thought fit, as a reward for his past services, to promote Cerberus to the office of the Master of the Hounds. He therefore is no longer responsible."

"O—h!" shrieked the Furies, as they elevated their hideous eyes.

"The constitution has invested your Majesty with a power in the appointment of your Officers of State which your Majesty has undoubtedly a right to exercise," said Lachesis. "What degree of discretion it anticipated in the exercise, it is now unnecessary, and would be extremely disagreeable, to discuss. I shall not venture to inquire by what new influence your Majesty has been guided in the present instance. The consequence of your Majesty's conduct is obvious, in the very difficult situation in which your realm is now placed. For myself and my colleagues, I have only to observe that we decline, under this crisis, any further responsibility; and the distaff and the shears are at your Majesty's service the moment your Majesty may find convenient successors to the present holders. As a last favour, in addition to the many we are proud to remember we have received from your Majesty, we entreat that we may be relieved from their burthen as quickly as possible." (Loud cheers from the Eumenides.)

"We had better recal Cerberus," said Pluto, alarmed, "and send this mortal about his business."

"Not without Eurydice. Oh! not without Eurydice," said the Queen.

"Silence, Proserpine," said Pluto.

"May it please your Majesty," said Lachesis, "I am doubtful whether we have the power of expelling any one from Hades. It is not less the law that a mortal cannot remain here; and it is too notorious for me to mention the fact, that none here have the power of inflicting death."

"Of what use are all your laws," exclaimed Proserpine, "if they are only to perplex us? As there are no statutes to guide us, it

is obvious that the King's will is supreme. Let Orpheus depart, then, with his bride."

"The latter suggestion is clearly illegal," said Lachesis.

"Lachesis, and ye, her sisters," said Proserpine, "forget, I beseech you, any hot words that may have passed between us, and, as a personal favour to one who would willingly be your friend, release Eurydice. What! you shake your heads! Nay; of what importance can be a single miserable shade, and one, too, summoned so cruelly before her time, in these thickly-peopled regions?"

"'Tis the principle," said Lachesis; "'tis the principle. Concession is ever fatal, however slight. Grant this demand; others, and greater, will quickly follow. Mercy becomes a precedent, and the realm is ruined."

"Ruined!" echoed the Furies.

"And I say *preserved!*" exclaimed Proserpine with energy. "The State is in confusion, and you yourselves confess that you know not how to remedy it. Unable to suggest a course, follow mine. I am the advocate of Mercy; I am the advocate of Concession; and, as you despise all higher impulses, I meet you on your own grounds. I am their advocate for the sake of policy, of expediency."

"Never!" said the Fates.

"Never!" shrieked the Furies.

"What, then, will you do with Orpheus?"

The Parcæ shook their heads; even the Eumenides were silent.

"Then you are unable to carry on the King's government; for Orpheus must be disposed of;—all agree to that. Pluto, reject these counsellors, at once insulting and incapable. Give me the distaff and the fatal shears. At once form a new Cabinet; and let the release of Orpheus and Eurydice be the basis of their policy." She threw her arms round his neck, and whispered in his ear.

Pluto was perplexed; his confidence in the Parcæ was shaken. A difficulty had occurred with which they could not cope. It was true the difficulty had been occasioned by a departure from their own exclusive and restrictive policy. It was clear that the gates of Hell ought never to have been opened to the stranger; but opened they had been. Forced to decide, he decided on the side of ex-

pediency, and signed a decree for the departure of Orpheus and Eurydice. The Parcae immediately resigned their posts, and the Furies walked off in a huff. Thus, on the third day of the Infernal Marriage, Pluto found that he had quarrelled with all his family, and that his ancient administration was broken up. The King was without a friend, and Hell was without a Government!

P A R T II.

I.

LET us change the scene from Hades to Olympus.

A chariot drawn by dragons hovered over that superb palace whose sparkling steps of lapis-lazuli were once pressed by the daring foot of Ixion. It descended into the beautiful gardens, and Ceres stepping out, sought the presence of Jove.

"Father of Gods and men," said the majestic mother of Proserpine, "listen to a distracted parent! All my hopes were centred in my daughter, the daughter of whom you have deprived me. Is it for this that I endured the pangs of childbirth? Is it for this that I suckled her on this miserable bosom? Is it for this that I tended her girlish innocence? watched with vigilant fondness the development of her youthful mind, and cultured with a thousand graces and accomplishments her gifted and unrivalled promise?—to lose her for ever!"

"Beloved Bona Dea," replied Jove, "calm yourself!"

"Jupiter, you forget that I am a mother."

"It is the recollection of that happy circumstance that alone should make you satisfied."

"Do you mock me? Where is my daughter?"

"In the very situation you should desire. In her destiny all is fulfilled which the most affectionate mother could hope. What was the object of all your care, and all her accomplishments?—a good *partie*; and she has made one."

"To reign in Hell!"

"‘Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.’ What! would you have had her a cup-bearer like Hebe, or a messenger like Hermes? Was the daughter of Jove and Ceres to be destined to a mere place in our household! Lady! she is the object of envy to half the Goddesses. Bating our own bed, which she could not share, what lot more distinguished than hers? Recollect that Goddesses, who desire a becoming match, have a very limited circle to

elect from. Even Venus was obliged to put up with Vulcan. It will not do to be too nice. Thank your stars that she is not an old maid like Minerva."

"But Mars? he loved her."

"A young officer only with his half-pay, however good his connections, is surely not a proper mate for our daughter."

"Apollo?"

"I have no opinion of a literary son-in-law. These scribblers are at present the fashion, and are very well to ask to dinner; but I confess a more intimate connection with them is not at all to my taste."

"I meet Apollo everywhere."

"The truth is, he is courted because every one is afraid of him. He is the editor of a daily journal, and under the pretence of throwing light upon every subject, brings a great many disagreeable things into notice, which is excessively inconvenient. Nobody likes to be paragraphed; and for my part I should only be too happy to extinguish the Sun and every other newspaper, were it only in my power."

"But Pluto is so very old, and so very ugly, and, all agree, so very ill-tempered."

"He has a splendid income, a magnificent estate; his settlements are worthy of his means. This ought to satisfy a mother; and his political influence is necessary to me, and this satisfies a father."

"But the heart——"

"As for that, she fancies she loves him; and whether she do or not, these feelings, we know, never last. Rest assured, my dear Ceres, that our girl has made a brilliant match, in spite of the gloomy atmosphere in which she has to reside."

"It must end in misery. I know Proserpine. I confess it with tears, she is a spoiled child."

"This may occasion Pluto many uneasy moments; but that is nothing to you or me. Between ourselves, I shall not be at all surprised if she plague his life out."

"But how can she consort with the Fates? How is it possible for her to associate with the Furies?—she, who is used to the gayest and most amiable society in the world? Indeed, indeed, 'tis an ill-assorted union!"

"They are united, however; and, take my word for it, my dear

madam, that you had better leave Pluto alone. The interference of a mother-in-law is proverbially never very felicitous."

II.

In the meantime affairs went on swimmingly in Tartarus. The obstinate Fates and the sulky Furies were unwittingly the cause of universal satisfaction. Every one enjoyed himself, and enjoyment when it is unexpected is doubly satisfactory. Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Ixion, for the first time during their punishment, had an opportunity for a little conversation.

"Long live our reforming Queen," said the ex-king of Lydia. "You cannot conceive, my dear companions, anything more delightful than this long-coveted draught of cold water; its flavour far surpasses the memory of my choicest wines. And as for this delicious fruit—one must live in a hot climate, like our present one, sufficiently to appreciate its refreshing gust. I would, my dear friends, you could only share my banquet."

"Your Majesty is very kind," replied Sisyphus, "but it seems to me that nothing in the world will ever induce me again to move. One must have toiled for ages to comprehend the rapturous sense of repose that now pervades my exhausted frame. Is it possible that that damned stone can really have disappeared?"

"You say truly," said Ixion, "the couches of Olympus cannot compare with this resting wheel."

"Noble Sisyphus," rejoined Tantalus, "we are both of us acquainted with the cause of our companion's presence in these infernal regions, since his daring exploit has had the good fortune of being celebrated by one of the fashionable authors of this part of the world."

"I have never had time to read his work," interrupted Ixion. "What sort of a fellow is he?"

"One of the most conceited dogs that I ever met with," replied the King. "He thinks he is a great genius, and perhaps he has some little talent for the extravagant."

"Are there any critics in Hell?"

"Myriads. They abound about the marshes of Cocytus, where they croak furiously. They are all to a man against our author."

"That speaks more to his credit than his own self-opinion," rejoined Ixion.

“*A nous moutons!*” exclaimed Tantalus; “I was about to observe that I am curious to learn for what reason our friend Sisyphus was doomed to his late terrible exertions.”

“For the simplest in the world,” replied the object of the inquiry—“because I was not a hypocrite. No one ever led a pleasanter life than myself, and no one was more popular in society. I was considered, as they phrased it, the most long-headed prince of my time, and was in truth a finished man of the world. I had not an acquaintance whom I had not taken in, and gods and men alike favoured me. In an unlucky moment, however, I offended the infernal deities, and it was then suddenly discovered that I was the most abandoned character of my age. You know the rest.”

“You seem,” exclaimed Tantalus, “to be relating my own history; for I myself led a reckless career with impunity, until some of the Gods did me the honour of dining with me, and were dissatisfied with the repast. I am convinced myself that, provided a man frequent the temples, and observe with strictness the sacred festivals, such is the force of public opinion, that there is no crime which he may not commit without hazard.”

“Long live hypocrisy!” exclaimed Ixion. “It is not my forte. But if I began life anew, I would be more observant in my sacrifices.”

“Who could have anticipated this wonderful revolution!” exclaimed Sisyphus, stretching himself. “I wonder what will occur next! Perhaps we shall be all released.”

“You say truly,” said Ixion. “I am very grateful to our reforming Queen; but I have no idea of stopping here. This cursed wheel indeed no longer whirls; but I confess my expectations will be very much disappointed if I cannot free myself from these adamantine bonds that fix me to its orb.”

“And one cannot drink water for ever,” said Tantalus.

“D—n all half measures,” said Ixion. “We must proceed in this system of amelioration.”

“Without doubt,” responded his companion.

“The Queen must have a party,” continued the audacious lover of Juno. “The Fates and the Furies never can be conciliated. It is evident to me that she must fall unless she unbinds these chains of mine.”

“And grants me full liberty of egress and regress,” exclaimed Sisyphus.

“And me a bottle of the finest golden wine of Lydia,” said Tantalus.

III.

The infernal honey-moon was over. A cloud appeared in the hitherto serene heaven of the royal lovers. Proserpine became very unwell. A mysterious languor pervaded her frame; her accustomed hilarity deserted her. She gave up her daily rides; she never quitted the palace, scarcely her chamber. All day long she remained lying on a sofa, and whenever Pluto endeavoured to console her she went into hysterics. His Majesty was quite miserable, and the Fates and the Furies began to hold up their heads. The two court physicians could throw no light upon the complaint, which baffled all their remedies. These, indeed, were not numerous, for the two physicians possessed each only one idea. With one every complaint was *nervous*; the other traced everything to *bile*. The name of the first was Dr. Blue-Devil; and of the other Dr. Blue-Pill. They were most eminent men.

Her Majesty getting worse every day, Pluto, in despair, determined to send for Æsculapius. It was a long way to send for a physician; but then he was the most fashionable one in the world. He cared not how far he travelled to visit a patient, because he was paid by the mile; and it was calculated that his fee for quitting earth, and attending the Queen of Hell, would allow him to leave off business.

What a wise physician was Æsculapius! Physic was his abhorrence. He never was known, in the whole course of his practice, ever to have prescribed a single drug. He was a very handsome man, with a flowing beard curiously perfumed, and a robe of the choicest purple. He twirled a cane of agate, round which was twined a serpent of precious stones, the gift of Juno, and he rode in a chariot drawn by horses of the Sun. When he visited Proserpine, he neither examined her tongue nor felt her pulse, but gave her an account of a fancy ball which he had attended the last evening he passed on *terra firma*. His details were so interesting that the Queen soon felt much better. The next day he renewed his visit, and gave her an account of a new singer that had ap-

peared at Ephesus. The effect of this recital was so satisfactory, that a bulletin in the evening announced that the Queen was convalescent. The third day Æsculapius took his departure, having previously enjoined change of scene for her Majesty, and a visit to the Elysian Fields!

IV.

"Heh, heh!" shrieked Tisiphone.

"Hah, hah!" squeaked Megæra.

"Hoh, hoh!" moaned Alecto.

"Now or never," said the infernal sisters. "There is a decided reaction. The moment she embarks, unquestionably we will flare up." So they ran off to the Fates.

"We must be prudent," said Clotho.

"Our time is not come," remarked Lachesis.

"I wish the reaction was more decided," said Atropos; "but it is a great thing that they are going to be parted, for the King must remain."

The opposition party, although aiming at the same result, was therefore evidently divided as to the means by which it was to be obtained. The sanguine Furies were for fighting it out at once, and talked bravely of the strong conservative spirit only dormant in Tartarus. Even the Radicals themselves are dissatisfied: Tantalus is no longer contented with water, or Ixion with repose. But the circumspect Fates felt that a false step at present could never be regained. They talked, therefore, of watching events. Both divisions, however, agreed that the royal embarkation was to be the signal for renewed intrigues and renovated exertions.

V.

When Proserpine was assured that she must be parted for a time from Pluto, she was inconsolable. They passed the night in sorrowful embraces. She vowed that she could not live a day without him, and that she certainly should die before she reached the first post. The mighty heart of the King of Hades was torn to pieces with contending emotions. In the agony of his overwhelming passion the security of his realm seemed of secondary importance compared with the happiness of his wife. Fear and

hatred of the Parcæ and the Eumenides equalled, however, in the breast of Proserpine, her affection for her husband. The consciousness that his absence would be a signal for a revolution, and that the crown of Tartarus might be lost to her expected offspring, animated her with a spirit of heroism. She reconciled herself to the terrible separation, on condition that Pluto wrote to her every day.

“Adieu! my best, my only beloved!” ejaculated the unhappy Queen; “do not forget me for a moment; and let nothing in the world induce you to speak to any of those horrid people. I know them; I know exactly what they will be at: the moment I am gone they will commence their intrigues for the restoration of the reign of doom and torture. Don’t listen to them, my Pluto. Sooner than have recourse to them, seek assistance from their former victims.”

“Calm yourself, my Proserpine. Anticipate no evil. I shall be firm; do not doubt me. I will cling with tenacity to that *juste milieu* under which we have hitherto so eminently prospered. Neither the Parcæ and the Eumenides, nor Ixion and his friends, shall advance a point. I will keep each faction in awe by the bugbear of the other’s supremacy. Trust me, I am a profound politician.”

VI.

It was determined that the progress of Proserpine to the Elysian Fields should be celebrated with a pomp and magnificence becoming her exalted station. The day of her departure was proclaimed as a high festival in Hell. Tiresias, absent on a secret mission, had been summoned back by Pluto, and appointed to attend her Majesty during her journey and her visit, for Pluto had the greatest confidence in his discretion. Besides, as her Majesty had not at present the advantage of any female society, it was necessary that she should be amused; and Tiresias, though old, ugly, and blind, was a wit as well as a philosopher, the most distinguished diplomatist of his age, and considered the best company in Hades.

An immense crowd was assembled round the gates of the palace on the morn of the royal departure. With what anxious curiosity did they watch those huge brazen portals! Every precaution was taken for the accommodation of the public. The streets were

lined with troops of extraordinary stature, whose nodding plumes prevented the multitude from catching a glimpse of anything that passed, and who cracked the skulls of the populace with their scimitars if they attempted in the slightest degree to break the line. Moreover, there were seats erected which any one might occupy at a very reasonable rate; but the lord steward, who had the disposal of the tickets, purchased them all for himself, and then resold them to his fellow-subjects at an enormous price.

At length the hinges of the gigantic portals gave an ominous creak, and, amid the huzzas of men and the shrieks of women, the procession commenced.

First came the infernal band. It consisted of five hundred performers, mounted on different animals. Never was such a melodious blast. Fifty trumpeters, mounted on zebras of all possible stripes and tints, and working away at huge ramshorns with their cheeks like pumpkins. Then there were bassoons mounted on bears, clarionets on camelopards, oboes on unicorns, and troops of musicians on elephants, playing on real serpents, whose prismatic bodies indulged in the most extraordinary convolutions imaginable, and whose arrowy tongues glittered with superb agitation at the exquisite sounds which they unintentionally delivered. Animals there were, too, now unknown and forgotten; but I must not forget the fellow who beat the kettledrums, mounted on an enormous mammoth, and the din of whose reverberating blows would have deadened the thunder of Olympus.

This enchanting harmony preceded the regiment of Proserpine's own guards, glowing in adamantine armour and mounted on coal-black steeds. Their helmets were quite awful, and surmounted by plumes plucked from the wings of the Harpies, which were alone enough to terrify an earthly host. It was droll to observe this troop of gigantic heroes commanded by infants, who, however, were arrayed in a similar costume, though, of course, on a smaller scale. But such was the admirable discipline of the infernal forces, that, though lions to their enemies, they were lambs to their friends; and on the present occasion their colonel was carried in a cradle.

After these came twelve most worshipful baboons, in most venerable wigs. They were clothed with scarlet robes lined with ermine, and ornamented with gold chains, and mounted on the most obstinate and inflexible mules in Tartarus. These were the judges. Each was provided with a pannier of choice cobnuts,

which he cracked with great gravity, throwing the shells to the multitude—an infernal ceremony, there held emblematic of their profession.

The Lord Chancellor came next in a very grand car. Although his wig was even longer than those of his fellow functionaries, his manners and the rest of his costume afforded a very strange contrast to them. Apparently never was such a droll, lively fellow. His dress was something between that of Harlequin and Scaramouch. He amused himself by keeping in the air four brazen balls at the same time, swallowing daggers, spitting fire, turning sugar into salt, and eating yards of pink ribbon, which, after being well digested, re-appeared through his nose. It is unnecessary to add, after this, that he was the most popular Lord Chancellor that had ever held the seals, and was received with loud and enthusiastic cheers, which apparently repaid him for all his exertions. Notwithstanding his numerous and curious occupations, I should not omit to add that his Lordship, nevertheless, found time to lead by the nose a most meek and milk-white jackass that immediately followed him, and which, in spite of the remarkable length of its ears, seemed the object of great veneration. There was evidently some mystery about this animal difficult to penetrate. Among other characteristics, it was said, at different seasons, to be distinguished by different titles; for sometimes it was styled "The Public," at others "Opinion," and occasionally was saluted as the "King's Conscience."

Now came a numerous company of Priests, in flowing and funeral robes, bearing banners, inscribed with the various titles of their Queen; on some was inscribed Hecate, on others Juno Inferna, on others Theogamia, Libera on some, on others Cotytto. Those that bore banners were crowned with wreaths of narcissus, and mounted on bulls blacker than night, and of a most severe and melancholy aspect. Others walked by their side, bearing branches of cypress.

And here I must stop to notice a droll characteristic of the priestly economy of Hades. To be a good pedestrian was considered an essential virtue of an infernal clergyman; but to be mounted on a black bull was the highest distinction of the craft. It followed, therefore, that, originally, promotion to such a seat was the natural reward of any priest who had distinguished himself in the humbler career of a good walker; but in process of time, as

even infernal as well as human institutions are alike liable to corruption, the black bulls became too often occupied by the halt and the crippled, the feeble and the paralytic, who used their influence at Court to become thus exempted from the performance of the severer duties of which they were incapable. This violation of the priestly constitution excited at first great murmurs among the abler but less influential brethren. But the murmurs of the weak prove only the tyranny of the strong; and so completely in the course of time do institutions depart from their original character, that the imbecile riders of the black bulls now avowedly defended their position on the very grounds which originally should have unseated them, and openly maintained that it was very evident that the stout were intended to walk, and the feeble to be carried.

The priests were followed by fifty dark chariots, drawn by blue satyrs. Herein was the wardrobe of the Queen, and her Majesty's cooks.

Tiresias came next, in a basalt chariot, yoked to royal steeds. He was attended by Manto, who shared his confidence, and who, some said, was his daughter, and others, his niece. Venerable seer! Who could behold that flowing beard, and the thin grey hairs of that lofty and wrinkled brow, without being filled with sensations of awe and affection? A smile of bland benignity played upon his passionless and reverend countenance. Fortunate the monarch who is blessed with such a counsellor! Who could have supposed that all this time Tiresias was concocting an epigram on Pluto!

The Queen! The Queen!

Upon a superb throne, placed upon an immense car, and drawn by twelve coal-black steeds, four abreast, reposed the royal daughter of Ceres. Her rich dark hair was braided off her high pale forehead, and fell in voluptuous clusters over her back. A tiara sculptured out of a single brilliant, and which darted a flash like lightning on the surrounding multitude, was placed somewhat negligently on the right side of her head; but no jewels broke the entrancing swell of her swan-like neck, or were dimmed by the lustre of her ravishing arms. How fair was the Queen of Hell! How thrilling the solemn lustre of her violet eye! A robe, purple as the last hour of twilight, encompassed her transcendent form, studded with golden stars!

VII.

Through the dim hot streets of Tartarus moved the royal procession, until it reached the first winding of the river Styx. Here an immense assemblage of yachts and barges, dressed out with the infernal colours, denoted the appointed spot of the royal embarkation. Tiresias dismounting from his chariot, and leaning on Manto, now approached her Majesty, and requesting her royal commands, recommended her to lose no time in getting on board.

"When your Majesty is once on the Styx," observed the wily seer, "it may be somewhat difficult to recall you to Hades; but I know very little of Clotho, may it please your Majesty, if she have not already commenced her intrigues in Tartarus."

"You alarm me!" said Proserpine.

"It was not my intention. Caution is not fear."

"But do you think that Pluto——"

"May it please your Majesty, I make it a rule never to think. I know too much."

"Let us embark immediately!"

"Certainly; I would recommend your Majesty to get off at once. Myself and Manto will accompany you, and the cooks. If an order arrive to stay our departure, we can then send back the priests."

"You counsel well, Tiresias. I wish you had not been absent on my arrival. Affairs might have gone better."

"Not at all. Had I been in Hell, your enemies would have been more wary. Your Majesty's excellent spirit carried you through triumphantly; but it will not do so twice. You turned them out, and I must keep them out."

"So be it, my dear friend." Thus saying, the Queen descended her throne, and leaving the rest of her retinue to follow with all possible despatch, embarked on board the infernal yacht, with Tiresias, Manto, the chief cook, and some chosen attendants, and bid adieu for the first time, not without agitation, to the gloomy banks of Tartarus.

VIII.

The breeze was favourable, and, animated by the exhortations of Tiresias, the crew exerted themselves to the utmost. The

barque swiftly scudded over the dark waters. The river was of great breadth, and in this dim region the crew were soon out of sight of land.

"You have been in Elysium?" inquired Proserpine of Tiresias.

"I have been everywhere," replied the seer, "and though I am blind have managed to see a great deal more than my fellows."

"I have often heard of you," said the Queen, "and I confess that yours is a career which has much interested me. What vicissitudes in affairs have you not witnessed! And yet you have somehow or other contrived to make your way through all the storms in which others have sunk, and are now, as you always have been, in a very exalted position. What can be your magic? I would that you would initiate me. I know that you are a prophet, and that even the Gods consult you."

"Your Majesty is complimentary. I certainly have had a great deal of experience. My life has no doubt been a long one, but I have made it longer by never losing a moment. I was born, too, at a great crisis in affairs. Everything that took place before the Trojan war passes for nothing in the annals of wisdom. That was a great revolution in all affairs human and divine, and from that event we must now date all our knowledge. Before the Trojan war, we used to talk of the rebellion of the Titans, but that business now is an old almanac. As for my powers of prophecy, believe me, that those who understand the past are very well qualified to predict the future. For my success in life, it may be principally ascribed to the observance of a very simple rule—I never trust any one, either God or man. I make an exception in favour of the Goddesses, and especially of your Majesty," added Tiresias, who piqued himself on his gallantry.

While they were thus conversing, the Queen directed the attention of Manto to a mountainous elevation which now began to rise in the distance, and which, from the rapidity of the tide and the freshness of the breeze, they approached at a very swift rate.

"Behold the Stygian mountains," replied Manto. "Through their centre runs the passage of Night which leads to the regions of Twilight."

"We have, then, far to travel?"

"Assuredly it is no easy task to escape from the gloom of Tar-

tarus to the sunbeams of Elysium," remarked Tiresias; "but the pleasant is generally difficult; let us be grateful that in our instance it is not, as usual, forbidden."

"You say truly; I am sorry to confess how very often it appears to me that sin is enjoyment. But see! how awful are these perpendicular heights, piercing the descending vapours, with their peaks clothed with dark pines! We seem land-locked."

But the experienced master of the infernal yacht knew well how to steer his charge through the intricate windings of the river, which here, though deep and navigable, became as wild and narrow as a mountain stream; and, as the tide no longer served them, and the wind, from their involved course, was as often against them as in their favour, the crew were obliged to have recourse to their oars, and rowed along until they arrived at the mouth of an enormous cavern, from which the rapid stream apparently issued.

"I am frightened out of my wits," exclaimed Proserpine. "Surely this cannot be our course?"

"I hold, from your Majesty's exclamation," said Tiresias, "that we have arrived at the passage of Night. When we have proceeded some hundred yards, we shall reach the adamantine portals. I pray your Majesty be not alarmed. I alone have the signet which can force these mystic gates to open. I must be stirring myself. What, ho! Manto."

"Here am I, father. Hast thou the seal?"

"In my breast. I would not trust it to my secretaries. They have my portfolios full of secret despatches, written on purpose to deceive them; for I know that they are spies in the pay of Minerva; but your Majesty perceives, with a little prudence, that even a traitor may be turned to account."

Thus saying, Tiresias, leaning on Manto, hobbled to the poop of the vessel, and exclaiming aloud, "Behold the mighty seal of Dis, whereon is inscribed the word the Titans fear," the gates immediately flew open, revealing the gigantic form of the Titan Porphyryon, whose head touched the vault of the mighty cavern, although he was up to his waist in the waters of the river.

"Come, my noble Porphyryon," said Tiresias, "bestir thyself, I

beseech thee. I have brought thee a Queen. Guide her Majesty, I entreat thee, with safety through this awful passage of Night."

"What a horrible creature," whispered Proserpine. "I wonder you address him with such courtesy."

"I am always courteous," replied Tiresias. "How know I that the Titans may not yet regain their lost heritage? They are terrible fellows; and ugly or not, I have no doubt that even your Majesty would not find them so ill-favoured were they seated in the halls of Olympus."

"There is something in that," replied Proserpine. "I almost wish I were once more in Tartarus."

The Titan Porphyryon in the meantime had fastened a chain-cable to the vessel, which he placed over his shoulder, and turning his back to the crew, then wading through the waters, he dragged on the vessel in its course. The cavern widened, the waters spread. To the joy of Proserpine, apparently, she once more beheld the moon and stars.

"Bright crescent of Diana!" exclaimed the enraptured Queen, "and ye too, sweet stars, that I have so often watched on the Sicilian plains; do I, then, indeed again behold you? or is it only some exquisite vision that entrances my being? for, indeed, I do not feel the freshness of that breeze that was wont to renovate my languid frame; nor does the odorous scent of flowers wafted from the shores delight my jaded senses. What is it? Is it life or death—earth, indeed, or hell?"

"'Tis nothing," said Tiresias, "but a great toy. You must know that Saturn—until at length, wearied by his ruinous experiments, the Gods expelled him his empire—was a great dabbler in systems. He was always for making moons brighter than Dian, and lighting the stars by gas; but his systems never worked. The tides rebelled against their mistress, and the stars went out with a horrible stench. This is one of his creations—the most ingenious, though a failure. Jove made it a present to Pluto, who is quite proud of having a sun and stars of his own, and reckons it among the choice treasures of his kingdoms."

"Poor Saturn! I pity him—he meant well."

"Very true. He is the paviour of the high-street of Hades. But we cannot afford kings, and especially Gods, to be philoso-

phers. The certainty of misrule is better than the chance of good government; uncertainty makes people restless."

"I feel very restless myself; I wish we were in Elysium!"

"The river again narrows!" exclaimed Manto. "There is no other portal to pass. The Saturnian moon and stars grow faint—there is a grey tint expanding in the distance—'tis the realm of Twilight—your Majesty will soon disembark."

P A R T III.

I.

Containing an account of Tiresias at his rubber.

TRAVELLERS who have left their homes generally grow mournful as the evening draws on; nor is there, perhaps, any time at which the pensive influence of twilight is more predominant than on the eve that follows a separation from those we love. Imagine, then, the feelings of the Queen of Hell, as her barque entered the very region of that mystic light, and the shadowy shores of the realm of Twilight opened before her. Her thoughts reverted to Pluto; and she mused over all his fondness, all his adoration, and all his indulgence, and the infinite solicitude of his affectionate heart, until the tears trickled down her beautiful checks, and she marvelled she ever could have quitted the arms of her lover.

“Your Majesty,” observed Manto, who had been whispering to Tiresias, “feels, perhaps, a little wearied?”

“By no means, my kind Manto,” replied Proserpine, starting from her reverie. “But the truth is, my spirits are very unequal; and though I really cannot well fix upon the cause of their present depression, I am apparently not free from the contagion of the surrounding gloom.”

“It is the evening air,” said Tiresias. “Your Majesty had perhaps better re-enter the pavilion of the yacht. As for myself, I never venture about after sunset. One grows romantic. Night was evidently made for in-door nature. I propose a rubber.”

To this popular suggestion Proserpine was pleased to accede, and herself and Tiresias, Manto and the captain of the yacht, were soon engaged at the proposed amusement.

Tiresias loved a rubber. It was true he was blind, but then being a prophet, that did not signify. Tiresias, I say, loved a rubber, and was a first-rate player, though, perhaps, given a little too much to *finesse*. Indeed, he so much enjoyed taking in his fellow-creatures, that he sometimes could not resist deceiving his

own partner. Whist is a game which requires no ordinary combination of qualities; at the same time, memory and invention, a daring fancy, and a cool head. To a mind like that of Tiresias, a pack of cards was full of human nature. A rubber was a microcosm; and he ruffed his adversary's king, or brought in a long suit of his own with as much dexterity and as much enjoyment as, in the real business of existence, he dethroned a monarch, or introduced a dynasty.

"Will your Majesty be pleased to draw your card?" requested the sage. "If I might venture to offer your Majesty a hint, I would dare to recommend your Majesty not to play before your turn. My friends are fond of ascribing my success in my various missions to the possession of peculiar qualities. No such thing: I owe everything to the simple habit of always waiting till it is my turn to speak. And believe me, that he who plays before his turn at whist, commits as great a blunder as he who speaks before his turn during a negotiation."

"The trick, and two by honours," said Proserpine. "Pray, my dear Tiresias, you who are such a fine player, how came you to trump my best card?"

"Because I wanted the lead. And those who want to lead, please your Majesty, must never hesitate about sacrificing their friends."

"I believe you speak truly. I was right in playing that thirteenth card?"

"Quite so. Above all things, I love a thirteenth card. I send it forth, like a mock project in a revolution, to try the strength of parties."

"You should not have forced me, Lady Manto," said the Captain of the yacht, in a grumbling tone, to his partner. "By weakening me, you prevented me bringing in my spades. We might have made the game."

"You should not have been forced," said Tiresias. "If she made a mistake, who was unacquainted with your plans, what a terrible blunder you committed to share her error without her ignorance!"

"What, then, was I to lose a trick?"

"Next to knowing when to seize an opportunity," replied Tiresias, "the most important thing in life is to know when to forego an advantage."

"I have cut you an honour, sir," said Manto.

"Which reminds me," replied Tiresias, "that, in the last hand, your Majesty unfortunately forgot to lead through your adversary's ace. I have often observed that nothing ever perplexes an adversary so much as an appeal to his honour."

"I will not forget to follow your advice," said the Captain of the yacht, playing accordingly.

"By which you have lost the game," quietly remarked Tiresias. "There are exceptions to all rules, but it seldom answers to follow the advice of an opponent."

"Confusion!" exclaimed the Captain of the yacht.

"Four by honours, and the trick, I declare," said Proserpine. "I was so glad to see you turn up the queen, Tiresias."

"I also, Madam. Without doubt there are few cards better than her royal consort, or, still more, the imperial ace. Nevertheless, I must confess, I am perfectly satisfied whenever I remember that I have the Queen on my side."

Proserpine bowed.

II.

Containing a Visit from a liberal Queen to a dethroned Monarch ; and a Conversation between them respecting the " Spirit of the Age."

"I have a good mind to do it, Tiresias," said Queen Proserpine, as that worthy sage paid his compliments to her at her toilet, at an hour which should have been noon.

"It would be a great compliment," said Tiresias.

"And it is not much out of our way?"

"By no means," replied the seer. "'Tis an agreeable half-way house. He lives in very good style."

"And whence can a dethroned monarch gain a revenue?" inquired the Queen.

"Your Majesty, I see, is not at all learned in politics. A sovereign never knows what an easy income is till he has abdicated. He generally commences squabbling with his subjects about the supplies; he is then expelled, and voted, as compensation, an amount about double the sum which was the cause of the original quarrel."

"What do you think, Manto?" said Proserpine, as that lady

entered the cabin; "we propose paying a visit to Saturn. He has fixed his residence, you know, in these regions of twilight."

"I love a junket," replied Manto, "above all things. And, indeed, I was half frightened out of my wits at the bare idea of toiling over this desert. All is prepared, please your Majesty, for our landing. Your Majesty's litter is quite ready."

"'Tis well," said Proserpine; and leaning on the arm of Manto, the Queen came upon deck, and surveyed the surrounding country,—a vast grey flat, with a cloudless sky of the same tint: in the distance some lowering shadows, which seemed like clouds but were in fact mountains.

"Some half-dozen hours," said Tiresias, "will bring us to the palace of Saturn. We shall arrive for dinner—the right hour. Let me recommend your Majesty to order the curtains of your litter to be drawn, and, if possible, to resume your dreams."

"They were not pleasant," said Proserpine, "I dreamt of my mother and the Parcæ. Manto, methinks I'll read. Hast thou some book?"

"Here is a poem, Madam, but I fear it may induce those very slumbers you dread."

"How call you it?"

"'The Pleasures of Oblivion.' The poet apparently is fond of his subject."

"And is, I have no doubt, equal to it. Hast any prose?"

"An historical novel or so."

"Oh! if you mean those things as full of costume as a fancy ball, and almost as devoid of sense, I'll have none of them. Close the curtains; even visions of the Furies are preferable to these insipidities."

The halt of the litter roused the Queen from her slumbers. "We have arrived," said Manto, as she assisted in withdrawing the curtains.

The train had halted before a vast propylon of rose-coloured granite. The gate was nearly two hundred feet in height, and the sides of the propylon, which rose like huge moles, were sculptured with colossal figures of a very threatening aspect. Passing through the propylon, the Queen of Hell and her attendants entered an avenue in length about three-quarters of a mile, formed of colossal figures of the same character and substance,

alternately raising in their arms javelins or battle-axes, as if about to strike. At the end of this heroic avenue appeared the palace of Saturn. Ascending a hundred steps of black marble, you stood before a portico supported by twenty columns of the same material, and shading a single portal of bronze. Apparently the palace formed an immense quadrangle; a vast tower rising from each corner, and springing from the centre a huge and hooded dome. A crowd of attendants, in grey and sad-coloured raiment, issued from the portal of the palace at the approach of Proserpine, who remarked with strange surprise their singular countenances and demeanour—for rare in this silent assemblage was any visage resembling aught she had seen, human or divine. Some bore the heads of bats; of owls and beetles others; some fluttered moth-like wings, while the shoulders of other bipeds were surmounted, in spite of their human organisation, with the heads of rats and weasels, of marten cats and of foxes. But they were all remarkably civil, and Proserpine, who was now used to wonders, did not shriek at all, and scarcely shuddered.

The Queen of Hell was ushered through a superb hall, and down a splendid gallery, to a suite of apartments where a body of damsels of a most distinguished appearance awaited her. Their heads resembled those of the most eagerly-sought, highly-prized, and oftenest-stolen lap-dogs. Upon the shoulders of one was the visage of the smallest and most thorough-bred little Blenheim in the world. Upon her front was a white star, her nose was nearly flat, and her ears were tied under her chin, with the most jaunty air imaginable. She was an evident flirt; and a solemn prude of a spaniel, with a black and tan countenance, who seemed a sort of duenna, evidently watched her with no little distrust. The admirers of blonde beauties would, however, have fallen in love with a poodle, with the finest head of hair imaginable, and most voluptuous shoulders. This brilliant band began barking in the most insinuating tone on the appearance of the Queen; and Manto, who was almost as dexterous a linguist as Tiresias himself, informed her Majesty that these were the ladies of her bedchamber; upon which Proserpine, who, it will be remembered, had no passion for dogs, ordered them immediately out of her room.

“What a droll place!” exclaimed the Queen. “Do you know we are later than I imagined? A hasty toilet to-day—I long to see Saturn. It is droll, I am hungry. My purple velvet, I think,—

it may be considered a compliment. No diamonds, only jet—a pearl or two, perhaps. Didst ever see the King? They say he is gentlemanlike, though a bigot. No! no rouge to-day—this paleness is quite *apropos*. Were I as radiant as usual, I should be taken for Aurora.”

So leaning on Manto, and preceded by the ladies of her bed-chamber, whom, notwithstanding their repulse, she found in due attendance in the antechamber, Proserpine again continued her progress down the gallery, until they stopped at a door, which opening, she was ushered into the grand circular saloon, crowned by the dome, whose exterior the Queen had already observed. The interior of this apartment was entirely of black and grey marble, with the exception of the dome itself, which was of ebony, richly carved, and supported by more than a hundred columns. There depended from the centre of the arch a single chandelier of frosted silver, which was itself as big as an ordinary chamber, but of the most elegant form, and delicate and fantastic workmanship. As the Queen entered the saloon, a personage of very venerable appearance, dressed in a suit of black velvet, and leaning on an ivory cane, advanced to salute her. There was no mistaking this personage; his manners were at once so courteous and so dignified. He was clearly their host; and Proserpine, who was quite charmed with his grey locks and his black velvet cap, his truly paternal air, and the beneficence of his unstudied smile, could scarcely refrain from bending her knee, and pressing her lips to his extended hand.

“I am proud that your Majesty has remembered me in my retirement,” said Saturn, as he led Proserpine to a seat.

Their mutual compliments were soon disturbed by the announcement of dinner, and Saturn offering his arm to the Queen with an air of politeness which belonged to the old school, but which the ladies admire in old men, handed Proserpine to the banqueting-room. They were followed by some of the principal personages of her Majesty’s suite, and a couple of young Titans, who enjoyed the posts of Aide-de-Camps to the ex-King, and whose duties consisted in carving at dinner.

It was a most agreeable dinner, and Proserpine was quite delighted with Saturn, who, of course, sat by her side, and paid her every possible attention. Saturn, whose manners, as has been observed, were of the old school, loved a good story, and told several. His anecdotes, especially of society previous to the Trojan

war, were highly interesting. There ran through all his behaviour, too, a tone of high breeding and of consideration for others which was really charming; and Proserpine, who had expected to find in her host a gloomy bigot, was quite surprised at the truly liberal spirit with which he seemed to consider affairs in general. Indeed this unexpected tone made so great an impression upon her, that finding a good opportunity after dinner, when they were sipping their coffee apart from the rest of the company, she could not refrain from entering into some conversation with the ex-King upon the subject, and the conversation ran thus:—

“Do you know,” said Proserpine, “that much as I have been pleased and surprised during my visit to the realms of twilight, nothing has pleased, and I am sure nothing has surprised me more, than to observe the remarkably liberal spirit in which your Majesty views the affairs of the day.”

“You give me a title, beautiful Proserpine, to which I have no claim,” replied Saturn. “You forget that I am now only Count Hesperus; I am no longer a king, and believe me, I am very glad of it.”

“What a pity, my dear sir, that you would not condescend to conform to the Spirit of the age. For myself, I am quite a reformer.”

“So I have understood, beautiful Proserpine, which I confess has a little surprised me; for to tell you the truth, I do not consider that reform is exactly *our* trade.”

“Affairs cannot go on as they used,” observed Proserpine, oracularly; “we must bow to the Spirit of the age.”

“And what is that?” inquired Saturn.

“I do not exactly know,” replied Proserpine, “but one hears of it everywhere.”

“I also heard of it a great deal,” replied Saturn, “and was also recommended to conform to it. Before doing so, however, I thought it as well to ascertain its nature, and something also of its strength.”

“It is terribly strong,” observed Proserpine.

“But you think it will be stronger?” inquired the ex-King.

“Certainly; every day it is more powerful.”

“Then if, on consideration, we were to deem resistance to it advisable, it is surely better to commence the contest at once than to postpone the struggle.”

"It is useless to talk of resisting; one must conform."

"I certainly should consider resistance useless," replied Saturn "for I tried it and failed; but at least one has a chance of success; and yet, having resisted this spirit and failed, I should not consider myself in a worse plight than you would voluntarily place yourself in by conforming to it."

"You speak riddles," said Proserpine.

"To be plain, then," replied Saturn, "I think you may as well at once give up your throne, as conform to this spirit."

"And why so?" inquired Proserpine, very ingenuously.

"Because," replied Saturn, shrugging up his shoulders, "I look upon the Spirit of the age as a spirit hostile to Kings and Gods."

III.

Containing the Titans; or a View of a subverted Faction.

The next morning Saturn himself attended his beautiful guest over his residence, which Proserpine greatly admired.

"'Tis the work of the Titans," replied the ex-King. "There never was a party so fond of building palaces."

"To speak the truth," said Proserpine, "I am a little disappointed that I have not had an opportunity, during my visit, of becoming acquainted with some of the chiefs of that celebrated party; for, although a Liberal, I am a female one, and I like to know every sort of person who is distinguished."

"The fact is," replied her host, "that the party has never recovered from the thunderbolt of that scheming knave Jupiter, and do not bear their defeat so philosophically as years, perhaps, permit me to do. If we have been vanquished by the Spirit of the age," continued Saturn, "you must confess that, in our case, the conqueror did not assume a material form very remarkable for its dignity. Had Creation resolved itself into its original elements,—had Chaos come again, or even old Coelus,—the indignity might have been endured;—but to be baffled by an Olympian *juste milieu*, and to find, after all the clamour, that nothing has been changed save the places, is, you will own, somewhat mortifying."

"But how do you reconcile," inquired the ingenuous Proserpine, "the success of Jupiter with the character which you ascribed last night to the Spirit of the age?"

“Why, in truth,” said Saturn, “had I not entirely freed myself from all party feeling, I might adduce the success of my perfidious and worthless relative as very good demonstration that the Spirit of the age is nothing better than an *ignis fatuus*. Nevertheless, we must discriminate. Even the success of Jupiter, although he now conducts himself in direct opposition to the emancipating principles he at first professed, is no less good evidence of their force; for by his professions he rose. And, for my part, I consider it a very great homage to public opinion to find every scoundrel now-a-days professing himself a Liberal.”

“You are candid,” said Proserpine. “I should like very much to see the Titans.”

“My friends are at least consistent,” observed Saturn; “though certainly at present I can say little more for them. Between the despair of one section of the party, and the over-sanguine expectations of the other, they are at present quite inactive, or move only to ensure fresh rebuffs.”

“You see little of them, then?”

“They keep to themselves: they generally frequent a lonely vale in the neighbourhood.”

“I should so like to see them!” exclaimed Proserpine.

“Say nothing to Tiresias,” said old Saturn, who was half in love with his fair friend, “and we will steal upon them unperceived.” So saying, the God struck the earth with his cane, and there instantly sprang forth a very convenient car, built of curiously-carved cedar, and borne by four enormous tawny-coloured owls. Seating himself by the side of the delighted Proserpine, Saturn commanded the owls to bear them to the Valley of Lamentations.

’Twas an easy fly: the chariot soon descended upon the crest of a hill; and Saturn and Proserpine, leaving the car, commenced, by a winding path, the slight ascent of a superior elevation. Having arrived there, they looked down upon a valley, apparently land-locked by black and barren mountains of the most strange, although picturesque forms. In the centre of the valley was a black pool or tarn, bordered with dark purple flags of an immense size, twining and twisting among which might be observed the glancing and gliding folds of several white serpents; while crocodiles and alligators, and other horrible forms, poked their foul snouts with evident delight in a vast mass of black slime, which had, at various times, exuded from the lake. A single tree only

was to be observed in this desolate place—an enormous and blasted cedar—with scarcely a patch of verdure, but extending its black and barren branches nearly across the valley. Seated on a loosened crag, but leaning against the trunk of the cedar, with his arms folded, his mighty eyes fixed on the ground, and his legs crossed with that air of complete repose which indicates that their owner is in no hurry again to move them, was

“A form, some granite god we deemed,
Or king of palmy Nile, colossal shapes
Such as Syene’s rosy quarries yield
To Memphian art; Horus, Osiris called,
Or Amenoph, who, on the Theban plain,
With magic melody the sun salutes;
Or he, far mightier, to whose conquering car
Monarchs were yoked, Rameses: by the Greeks
Sesostris styled. And yet no sculptor’s art
Moulded this shape, for form it seemed of flesh,
Yet motionless; its dim unlustrous orbs
Gazing in stilly vacancy, its cheek
Grey as its hairs, which, thin as they might seem,
No breath disturbed; a solemn countenance,
Not sorrowful, though full of woe sublime,
As if despair were now a distant dream
Too dim for memory.”

“’Tis their great leader,” said Saturn, as he pointed out the Titan to Proserpine, “the giant Enceladus. He got us into all our scrapes, but I must do him the justice to add, that he is the only one who can ever get us out of them. They say he has no heart; but I think his hook nose is rather fine.”

“Superb!” said Proserpine. “And who is that radiant and golden-haired youth who is seated at his feet?”

“’Tis no less a personage than Hyperion himself,” replied Saturn, “the favourite counsellor of Enceladus. He is a fine orator, and makes up by his round sentences and choice phrases for the rhetorical deficiencies of his chief, who, to speak the truth, is somewhat curt and husky. They have enough now to do to manage their comrades and keep a semblance of discipline in their routed ranks. Mark that ferocious Briareus there scowling in a corner! Didst ever see such a moustache! He glances, methinks,

with an evil eye on the mighty Enceladus; and, let me tell you, Briareus has a great following among them; so they say of him you know, that he hath fifty heads and a hundred arms. See! how they gather around him."

"Who speaks now to Briareus?"

"The young and valiant Mimas. Be assured he is counselling war. We shall have a debate now."

"Yon venerable personage, who is seated by the margin of the pool, and weeping with the crocodiles——"

"Is old Oceanus."

"He is apparently much affected by his overthrow."

"It is his wont to weep. He used to cry when he fought, and yet he was a powerful warrior."

"Hark!" said Proserpine.

The awful voice of Briareus broke the silence. What a terrible personage was Briareus! His wild locks hung loose about his shoulders, and blended with his unshorn beard.

"Titans!" shouted the voice which made many a heart tremble, and the breathless Proserpine clasp the arm of Saturn. "Titans! Is that spirit dead that once heaped Ossa upon Pelion? Is it forgotten even by ourselves, that a younger born revels in our heritage? Are these forms that surround me, indeed, the shapes at whose dread sight the base Olympians fled to their fitting earth? Warriors, whose weapons were the rocks, whose firebrands were the burning woods—is the day forgotten when Jove himself turned craven, and skulked in Egypt? At least my memory is keen enough to support my courage, and whatever the dread Enceladus may counsel, my voice is still for war!"

There ensued, after this harangue of Briareus, a profound and thrilling silence, which was, however, broken in due time by the great leader of the Titans himself.

"You mouth it well, Briareus," replied Enceladus, very calmly. "And if great words would re-seat us in Olympus, doubtless, with your potent aid, we might succeed. It never should be forgotten, however, that had we combined at first, in the spirit now recommended, the Olympians would never have triumphed; and least of all our party should Briareus and his friends forget the reasons of our disunion."

"I take thy sneer, Enceladus," said the young and chivalric

Mimas, "and throw it in thy teeth. This learn, then, from Briareus and his friends, that if we were lukewarm in the hour of peril, the fault lies not to our account, but with those who had previously so conducted themselves, that, when the danger arrived, it was impossible for us to distinguish between our friends and our foes. Enceladus apparently forgets that had the Olympians never been permitted to enter Heaven, it would have been unnecessary ever to have combined against their machinations."

"Recrimination is useless," said a Titan, interposing. "I was one of those who supported Enceladus in the admission of the Olympians above, and I regret it. But at the time, like others, I believed it to be the only mode of silencing the agitation of Jupiter."

"I separated from Enceladus on that question," said a huge Titan, lying his length on the ground and leaning one arm on a granite crag; "but I am willing to forget all our differences and support him with all my heart and strength in another effort to restore our glorious constitution."

"Titans," said Enceladus, "who is there among you who has found me a laggard in the day of battle? When the Olympians, as Briareus thinks it necessary to remind you, fled, I was your leader. Remember, however, then, that there were no thunderbolts. As for myself, I candidly confess to you, that, since the invention of these weapons by Jove, I do not see how war can be carried on by us any longer with effect."

"By the memory of old Coelus and these fast-flowing tears," murmured the venerable Oceanus, patting at the same time a crocodile on the back, "I call you all to witness that I have no interest to deceive you. Nevertheless, we should not forget that, in this affair of the thunderbolts, it is the universal opinion that there is a very considerable re-action. I have myself, only within these few days, received authentic information that several have fallen of late without any visible ill effects; and I am credibly assured that, during the late storm in Thessaly, a thunderbolt was precipitated into the centre of a vineyard, without affecting the flavour of a single grape."

Here several of the Titans, who had gathered round Enceladus, shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders, and a long and desultory conversation ensued upon the copious and very con-

controversial subject of Re-action. In the meantime Rhoetus, a very young Titan, whispered to one of his companions, that for his part he was convinced that the only way to beat the Olympians was to turn them into ridicule; and that he would accordingly commence at once with the pasquinade on the private life of Jupiter, and some peculiarly delicate criticisms on the characters of the Goddesses.

P A R T IV.

I.

Containing the first View of Elysium.

THE toilsome desert was at length passed, and the royal cavalcade ascended the last chasm of mountains that divided Elysium, or the Regions of Bliss, from the Realm of Twilight. As she quitted those dim and dreary plains, the spirit of Proserpine grew lighter, and she indulged in silent but agreeable anticipations of the scene which she was now approaching. On reaching, however, the summit of the mountainous chain, and proceeding a short distance over the rugged table-land into which it now declined, her Majesty was rather alarmed at perceiving that her progress was impeded by a shower of flame that extended, on either side, as far as the eye could reach. Her alarm, however, was of short continuance; for, on the production of his talisman by Tiresias, the shower of flame instantly changed into silvery drops of rose-water and other delicious perfumes. Amid joyous peals of laughter, and some slight playful screams on the part of the ladies, the cavalcade ventured through the ordeal. Now the effect of this magical bath was quite marvellous. A burthen seemed suddenly to have been removed from the spirits of the whole party—their very existence seemed renewed—the blood danced about their veins in the liveliest manner imaginable; and a wild but pleasing titillation ran like lightning through their nerves. Their countenances sparkled with excitement; and they all talked at the same time. Proserpine was so occupied with her own sensations, that she did not immediately remark the extraordinary change that had occurred in the appearance of the country immediately on passing this magical barrier. She perceived that their course now led over the most elastic and carefully-shaven turf; groups of the most beautiful shrubs occasionally appeared, and she discovered with delight that their flowers constantly opened, and sent forth from their bells diminutive birds of very radiant plumage. Above them, too, the

clouds had vanished, and her head was canopied by a sky, unlike, indeed, all things and tints of earth, but which reminded her, in some degree, of the splendour of Olympus.

Proserpine, restless with delight, quitted her litter, and followed by Manto, ran forward to catch the first view of Elysium.

"I am quite out of breath," said her Majesty, "and really must sit down on this bank of violets. Was ever anything in the world so delightful! Why, Olympus is nothing to it! And after Tartarus, too, and that poor unhappy Saturn, and his Titans and his twilight, it really is too much for me. How I do long for the view! and yet, somehow or other, my heart beats so I cannot walk."

"Will your Majesty re-ascend your litter?" suggested Manto.

"Oh, no! that is worse than anything. They are a mile behind—they are so slow. Why, Manto! what is this?"

A beautiful white dove hovered in the air over the head of Proserpine and her attendant, and then dropping an olive branch into the lap of the Queen, flapped its wings and whirled away. But what an olive branch! The stem was of agate; each leaf was an emerald; and on the largest, in letters of brilliants, was this inscription—

The Elysians to their beautiful Queen.

"Oh, is it not superb?" exclaimed Proserpine. "What charming people, and what excellent subjects! What loyalty and what taste!"

So saying, the enraptured Proserpine rose from the bank of violets, and had scarcely run forwards fifty yards when she suddenly stopped, and started with an exclamation of wonder. The table-land had ceased. She stood upon a precipice of white marble, in many parts clothed with thick bowers of myrtle; before her extended the wide-spreading plains of Elysium. They were bounded upon all sides by gentle elevations entirely covered with flowers, and occasionally shooting forward into the champaign country; behind these appeared a range of mountains clothed with bright green forests, and still loftier heights behind them, exhibiting, indeed, only bare and sharply-pointed peaks glittering with prismatic light. The undulating plain was studded in all directions with pavilions and pleasure-houses, and groves and gardens glowing with the choicest and most charming fruit; and a broad blue river wound through it, covered with brilliant boats, the

waters flashing with phosphoric light as they were cut by the swift and gliding keels. And in the centre of the plain rose a city, a mighty group of all that was beautiful in form and costly in materials—bridges and palaces and triumphal gates of cedar and of marble—columns and minarets of gold, and cupolas and domes of ivory; and ever and anon appeared delicious gardens, raised on the terraces of the houses; and groups of palm trees with their tall, thin stems, and quivering and languid crests, rose amid the splendid masonry. A sweet soft breeze touched the cheek of the entranced Proserpine, and a single star of silver light glittered in the rosy sky.

“’Tis my favourite hour,” exclaimed Proserpine. “Thus have I gazed upon Hesperus in the meads of Enna! What a scene! How fortunate that we should have arrived at sunset!”

“Ah, Madam!” observed Manto, “in Elysium the sky is ever thus. For the Elysians, the sun seems always to have just set!”

“Fortunate people!” replied Proserpine. “In them, immortality and enjoyment seem indeed blended together. A strange feeling, half of languor, half of voluptuousness, steals over my senses! It seems that I at length behold the region of my girlish dreams. Such once I fancied Olympus. Ah! why does not my Pluto live in Elysium?”

II.

Containing some account of the Manners of the Elysians, and of the Palace of Proserpine, and her strange Dream.

The Elysians consisted of a few thousand beatified mortals, the only occupation of whose existence was enjoyment; the rest of the population comprised some millions of Gnomes and Sylphs, who did nothing but work, and ensured by their labour the felicity of the superior class. Every Elysian, male or female, possessed a very magnificent palace in the city, and a very elegant pavilion on the plain: these, with a due proportion of chariots, horses, and slaves, constituted a proper establishment. The Sylphs and the Gnomes were either scattered about the country, which they cultivated, or lived in the city, where they kept shops, and where they emulated each other in displaying the most ingenious articles of luxury and convenience for the enjoyment and accommodation of

the Elysians. The townspeople, indeed, rather affected to look down upon the more simple-minded agriculturists; but if these occasionally felt a little mortification in consequence, they might have been consoled, had they been aware that their brethren and sisters who were in the service of the Elysians avenged their insults, for these latter were the finest Gnomes and Sylphs imaginable, and scarcely deigned to notice any one who was in trade. Whether there were any coin or other circulating medium current in Elysium is a point respecting which I must confess I have not sufficient information to decide; but if so, it certainly would appear that all money transactions were confined to the Gnomes and the Sylphs, for the Elysians certainly never paid for anything. Perhaps this exemption might have been among their peculiar privileges, and was a substitute for what we call *credit*, a convenience of which the ancients appear to have had a very limited conception. The invention, by Jupiter, of an aristocratic immortality, as a reward for a well-spent life on earth, appears to me to have been a very ingenious idea. It really is a reward, very stimulative of good conduct before we shuffle off the mortal coil, and remarkably contrasts with the democracy of the damned. The Elysians, with a splendid climate, a teeming soil, and a nation made on purpose to wait upon them, of course enjoyed themselves very much. The arts flourished, the theatres paid, and they had a much finer opera than at Ephesus, or at Halicarnassus. Their cookery was so refined, that one of the least sentimental ceremonies in the world was not only deprived of all its grossness, but was actually converted into an elegant amusement, and so famous that their artists were even required at Olympus. If their dinners were admirable, which is rare, their assemblies were amusing, which is still more uncommon. All the arts of society were carried to perfection in Elysium; a dull thing was never said, and an awkward thing never done. The Elysians, indeed, being highly refined and gifted, for they comprised in their order the very cream of terrestrial society, were naturally a very liberal-minded race of nobles, and very capable of appreciating every kind of excellence. If a Gnome or a Sylph, therefore, in any way distinguished themselves—if they sang very well, or acted very well, or if they were at all eminent for any of the other arts of amusement, ay! indeed if the poor devils could do nothing better than write a poem or a novel,

they were sure to be noticed by the Elysians, who always bowed to them as they passed by, and sometimes indeed even admitted them into their circles.

Scarcely had the train of Proserpine rejoined her on the brink of the precipice, than they heard the flourish of trumpets near at hand, soon followed by a most complete harmony of many instruments. A chorus of very sweet voices was next distinguished, growing each instant more loud and clear; and in a few minutes, issuing from a neighbouring grove, came forth a band of heroes and beautiful women, dressed in dazzling raiment, to greet the Queen. A troop of chariots of light and airy workmanship followed, and a crowd of Gnomes and Sylphs singing and playing on various instruments, and dancing with gestures of grace and delicacy. Congratulating the Queen on her arrival in Elysium, and requesting the honour of being permitted to attend her to her palace, they ushered Proserpine and her companions to the chariots, and soon, winding down a very gradual declivity, they entered the plain.

If a bird's-eye view of the capital had enchanted Proserpine, the agreeable impression was not diminished, as is generally the case, by her entrance into the city. Never were so much splendour and neatness before combined. Passing through a magnificent arch, Proserpine entered a street of vast and beautiful proportions, lined on each side with palaces of very various architecture, painted admirably in fresco, and richly gilt. The road was formed of pounded marbles of various colours, laid down in fanciful patterns, and forming an unrivalled mosaic; it was bounded on each side by a broad causeway of jasper, of a remarkably bright green, clouded with milk-white streaks. This street led to a sumptuous square, forming alone the palace destined for Proserpine. Its several fronts were supported and adorned by ten thousand columns, imitating the palm and the lotus; nor is it possible to conceive anything more light and graceful than the general effect of this stupendous building. Each front was crowned with an immense dome of alabaster, so transparent, that when the palace was illuminated, the rosy heaven grew pale, and an effect similar to moonlight was diffused over the canopy of Elysium. And in the centre of the square a Leviathan, carved in white coral, and apparently flouncing in a huge basin of rock crystal, spouted forth from his

gills a fountain twelve hundred feet in height; from one gill ascended a stream of delicious wine, which might be tempered, if necessary, by the iced water that issued from the other.

At the approach of the Queen, the gigantic gates of the palace, framed of carved cedar, flew open with a thrilling burst of music, and Proserpine found herself in a hall wherein several hundred persons, who formed her household, knelt in stillness before her. Wearied with her long journey, and all the excitement of the day, Proserpine signified to one of the Elysians in attendance her desire of refreshment and repose. Immediately the household rose, and gracefully bowing retired in silence,—while four ladies of the bed-chamber, very different from the dogfaced damsels of the realm of Twilight, advanced with a gracious smile, and each pressing a white hand to her heart, invited her Majesty to accompany them. Twelve beautiful pages in fanciful costume, and each bearing a torch of cinnamon, preceded them, and Proserpine ascended a staircase of turquoise and silver. As she passed along, she caught glimpses of costly galleries, and suites of gorgeous chambers, but she was almost too fatigued to distinguish anything. A confused vision of long lines of white columns, roofs of carved cedar, or ceilings glowing with forms of exquisite beauty, walls covered with lifelike tapestry, or reflecting in their mighty mirrors her own hurrying figure, and her picturesque attendants, alone remained. She rejoiced when she at length arrived in a small chamber, in which preparations evidently denoted that it was intended she should rest. It was a pretty little saloon, brilliantly illuminated, and hung with tapestry depicting a party of nymphs and shepherds feasting in an Arcadian scene. In the middle of the chamber a banquet was prepared, and as Proserpine seated herself, and partook of some of the delicacies which a page immediately presented to her, there arose, from invisible musicians, a joyous and festive strain, which accompanied her throughout her repast. When her Majesty had sufficiently refreshed herself, and as the banquet was removing, the music assumed a softer and more subduing, occasionally even a solemn tone—the tapestry, slowly shifting, at length represented the same characters sunk in repose; the attendants all this time gradually extinguishing the lights, and stealing on tiptoe from the chamber. So that, at last, the music, each moment growing fainter, entirely ceased; the figures on the tapestry were scarcely

perceptible by the dim lustre of a single remaining lamp; and the slumbering Proserpine fell back upon her couch.

But the Queen of Hell was not destined to undisturbed repose. A dream descended on her brain, and the dream was terrible and strange. She beheld herself a child, playing, as was her wont, in the gardens of Enna, twining garlands of roses, and chasing butterflies. Suddenly, from a bosky thicket of myrtle slowly issued forth an immense serpent, dark as night, but with eyes of the most brilliant tint, and approached the daughter of Ceres. The innocent child, ignorant of evil, beheld the monster without alarm. Not only did she neither fly nor shriek, but she even welcomed and caressed the frightful stranger, patted its voluminous back, and admired its sparkling vision. The serpent, fascinated instead of fascinating, licked her feet with his arrowy tongue, and glided about for her diversion in a thousand shapes. Emboldened by its gentleness, the little Proserpine at length even mounted on its back, and rode in triumph among her bowers. Every day the dark serpent issued from the thicket, and every day he found a welcome playmate. Now it came to pass that one day the serpent, growing more bold, induced the young Proserpine to extend her ride beyond the limits of Enna. Night came on, and as it was too late to return, the serpent carried her to a large cave, where it made for her a couch of leaves, and while she slept, the affectionate monster kept guard for her protection at the mouth of the cavern. For some reason or other which was not apparent, for in dreams there are always some effects without causes, Proserpine never returned to Enna, but remained and resided with cheerfulness in this cavern. Each morning the serpent went forth alone to seek food for its charge, and regularly returned with a bough in its mouth laden with delicious fruits. One day, during the absence of her guardian, a desire seized Proserpine to quit the cavern, and accordingly she went forth. The fresh air and fragrance of the earth were delightful to her, and she roamed about, unconscious of time, and thoughtless of her return. And as she sauntered along, singing to herself, a beautiful white dove, even the same dove that had welcomed her in the morning on the heights of Elysium, flew before her with its wings glancing in the sunshine. It seemed that the bird wished to attract the attention of the child, so long and so closely did it hover about her; now resting on a branch, as if inviting capture, and then skimming

away only to return more swiftly; and occasionally, when for a moment unnoticed, even slightly flapping the rambler with its plume. At length the child was taken with a fancy to catch the bird. But no sooner had she evinced this desire, than the bird, once apparently so anxious to be noticed, seemed resolved to lead her a weary chase; and hours flew away ere Proserpine, panting and exhausted, had captured the beautiful rover and pressed it to her bosom.

It was, indeed, a most beautiful bird, and its possession repaid her for all her exertions. But lo! as she stood, in a wild sylvan scene, caressing it, smoothing its soft plumage, and pressing its head to her cheek, she beheld in the distance approaching her the serpent, and she beheld her old friend with alarm. Apparently her misgiving was not without cause. She observed in an instant that the appearance and demeanour of the serpent were greatly changed. It approached her swift as an arrow, its body rolling in the most agitated contortions, its jaws were distended as if to devour her, its eyes flashed fire, its tongue was a forked flame, and its hiss was like a stormy wind. Proserpine shrieked,—and the Queen of Hell awoke from her dream.

III.

Containing some account of the wonderful Morality of the Elysians. Of Helen and Dido. General Society and Coteries. Characters of Achilles, Amphion, Patroclus, and Memnon.

The next morning the Elysian world called to pay their respects to Proserpine. Her Majesty, indeed, held a drawing-room, which was fully and brilliantly attended. Her beauty and her graciousness were universally pronounced enchanting. From this moment the career of Proserpine was a series of magnificent entertainments. The principal Elysians vied with each other in the splendour and variety of the amusements, which they offered to the notice of their Queen. Operas, plays, balls, and banquets followed in dazzling succession. Proserpine, who was almost inexperienced in society, was quite fascinated. She regretted the years she had wasted in her Sicilian solitude; she marvelled that she ever could have looked forward with delight to a dull annual visit to Olympus; she almost regretted that, for the sake of an

establishment, she could have been induced to cast her lot in the regal gloom of Tartarus. Elysium exactly suited her. The beauty of the climate and the country, the total absence of care, the constant presence of amusement, the luxury, gaiety, and refined enjoyment perfectly accorded with her amiable disposition, her lively fancy and her joyous temper. She drank deep and eagerly of the cup of pleasure. She entered into all the gay pursuits of her subjects; she even invented new combinations of diversion. Under her inspiring rule every one confessed that Elysium became every day more Elysian.

The manners of her companions greatly pleased her. She loved those faces always wreathed with smiles, yet never bursting into laughter. She was charmed at the amiable tone in which they addressed each other. Never apparently were people at the same time so agreeable, so obliging, and so polished. For in all they said and did might be detected that peculiar air of high-breeding which pervades the whole conduct of existence with a certain indefinable spirit of calmness, so that your nerves are never shaken by too intense an emotion, which eventually produces a painful reaction. Whatever they did, the Elysians were careful never to be vehement; a grand passion, indeed, was unknown in these happy regions; love assumed the milder form of flirtation; and as for enmity, you were never abused except behind your back, or it exuded itself in an epigram, or, at the worst, a caricature scribbled upon a fan.

There is one characteristic of the Elysians which, in justice to them, I ought not to have omitted. They were eminently a moral people. If a lady committed herself, she was lost for ever, and packed off immediately to the realm of Twilight. Indeed, they were so very particular, that the moment one of the softer sex gave the slightest symptoms of preference to a fortunate admirer, the Elysian world immediately began to look unutterable things, shrug its moral shoulders, and elevate its charitable eye-brows. But if the preference, by any unlucky chance, assumed the nobler aspect of devotion, and the unhappy fair one gave any indication of really possessing a heart, rest assured she was already half way on the road to perdition. Then commenced one of the most curious processes imaginable, peculiar I apprehend to Elysium, but which I record that the society of less fortunate lands may avail itself of the advantage, and adopt the regulation in its moral police. Im-

mediately that it was clearly ascertained that two persons of different sexes took an irrational interest in each other's society, all the world instantly went about, actuated by a purely charitable sentiment, telling the most extraordinary falsehoods concerning them that they could devise. Thus it was the fashion to call at one house and announce that you had detected the unhappy pair in a private box at the theatre, and immediately to pay your respects at another mansion and declare that you had observed them on the very same day, and at the very same hour, in a boat on the river. At the next visit, the gentleman had been discovered driving her in his cab; and in the course of the morning the scene of indiscretion was the Park, where they had been watched walking by moonlight, muffled up in sables and Cashmeres.

This curious process of diffusing information was known in Elysium under the title of "*being talked about*;" and although the stories thus disseminated were universally understood to be fictions, the Elysians ascribed great virtue to the proceeding, maintaining that many an indiscreet fair one had been providentially alarmed by thus becoming the subject of universal conversation—that thus many a reputation had been saved by this charitable slander. There were some malignant philosophers, indeed, doubtless from that silly love of paradox in all ages too prevalent, who pretended that all this Elysian morality was one great delusion, and that this scrupulous anxiety about the conduct of others arose from a principle, not of *Purity*, but of *Corruption*. The woman who is "talked about," these sages would affirm, is generally virtuous, and she is only abused because she devotes to one the charms which all wish to enjoy.

Thus Dido, who is really one of the finest creatures that ever existed, and who, with a majestic beauty, combines an heroic soul, has made her way with difficulty to the Elysian circle, to which her charms and rank entitle her; while Helen, who, from her very *début*, has been surrounded by fifty lovers, and whose intrigues have ever been notorious, is the very queen of fashion; and all this merely because she has favoured fifty instead of one, and in the midst of all her scrapes, has contrived to retain the countenance of her husband.

Apropos of Dido, the Queen of Carthage was the very person in all Elysium for whom Proserpine took the greatest liking. Exceedingly beautiful, with the most generous temper and the

softest heart in the world, and blessed by nature with a graceful simplicity of manner, which fashion had never sullied, it really was impossible to gaze upon the extraordinary brilliancy of her radiant countenance, to watch the symmetry of her superb figure, and to listen to the artless yet lively observations uttered by a voice musical as a bell, without being fairly bewitched.

When we first enter society, we are everywhere; yet there are few, I imagine, who, after a season, do not subside into a coterie. When the glare of saloons has ceased to dazzle, and we are wearied with the heartless notice of a crowd, we require refinement and sympathy. We find them, and we sink into a clique. And after all, can the river of life flow on more agreeably than in a sweet course of pleasure with those we love? To wander in the green shade of secret woods and whisper our affection—to float on the sunny waters of some gentle stream, and listen to a serenade—to canter with a light-hearted cavalcade over breezy downs, or cool our panting chargers in the summer stillness of winding and woody lanes—to banquet with the beautiful and the witty—to send care to the devil, and indulge the whim of the moment—the priest, the warrior, and the statesman may frown and struggle as they like—but this is existence, and this, this is Elysium!

So Proserpine deemed when, wearied with the monotony of the great world, she sought refuge in the society of Dido and Atalanta, Achilles, Amphion, and Patroclus or Memnon. When Æneas found that Dido had become so fashionable, he made overtures for a reconciliation, but Dido treated him with calm contempt. The pious Æneas, indeed, was the aversion of Proserpine. He was the head of the Elysian saints, was president of a society to induce the Gnomes only to drink water, and was so horrified at the general conduct of the Elysians, that he questioned the decrees of Minos and Rhadamanthus, who had permitted them to enter the happy region so easily. The pious Æneas was of opinion that everybody ought to have been damned except himself. Proserpine gave him no encouragement. Achilles was the finest gentleman in Elysium. No one dressed or rode like him. He was very handsome, very witty, very unaffected, and had an excellent heart. Achilles was the leader of the Elysian youth, who were, indeed, devoted to him: Proserpine took care, therefore, that he should dangle in her train. Amphion had a charming voice for a supper after the opera. He was a handsome little fellow, but not to be depended upon. He

broke a heart, or a dinner engagement, with the same reckless sentimentality; for he was one of those who always weep when they betray you, and whom you are sure never to see again immediately that they have vowed eternal friendship. Patroclus was a copy of Achilles without his talents and vivacity, but elegant and quiet. Of all these, Memnon was perhaps the favourite of Proserpine—nor must he be forgotten—amiable, gay, brilliant—the child of whim and impulse—in love with every woman he met for four-and-twenty hours, and always marvelling at his own delusion!

POPANILLA.

ADVERTISEMENT.

This narrative of an imaginary voyage was written in 1827.

POPANILLA.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is an island in the Indian Ocean, so unfortunate as not yet to have been visited either by Discovery Ships or Missionary Societies. It is a place where all those things are constantly found which men most desire to see, and with the sight of which they are seldom favoured. It abounds in flowers, and fruit, and sunshine. Lofty mountains, covered with green and mighty forests, except where the red rocks catch the fierce beams of the blazing sun, bowery valleys, broad lakes, gigantic trees, and gushing rivers bursting from rocky gorges, are crowned with a purple and ever cloudless sky. Summer, in its most unctuous state and most mellow majesty, is here perpetual. So intense and overpowering, in the daytime, is the rich union of heat and perfume, that living animal or creature is never visible; and were you and I to pluck, before sunset, the huge fruit from yonder teeming tree, we might fancy ourselves for the moment the future sinners of another Eden. Yet a solitude it is not.

The island is surrounded by a calm and blue lagoon, formed by a ridge of coral rocks, which break the swell of the ocean, and prevent the noxious spray from banishing the rich shrubs which grow even to the water's edge. It is a few minutes before sunset, that the first intimation of animal existence in this seeming solitude is given, by the appearance of mermaids; who, floating on the rosy sea, congregate about these rocks. They sound a loud but melodious chorus from their sea-shells, and a faint and distant chorus soon answers from the island. The mermaidens immediately repeat their salutations, and are greeted with a nearer and a louder answer. As the red and rayless sun drops into the glowing waters, the choruses simultaneously join; and rushing from the woods,

and down the mountain steeps to the nearest shore, crowds of human beings, at the same moment, appear and collect.

The inhabitants of this island, in form and face, do not misbecome the clime and the country. With the vivacity of a Faun, the men combine the strength of a Hercules, and the beauty of an Adonis; and, as their more interesting companions flash upon his presence, the least classical of poets might be excused for imagining that, like their blessed Goddess, the women had magically sprung from the brilliant foam of that ocean which is gradually subsiding before them.

But sunset in this land is not the signal merely for the evidence of human existence. At the moment that the Islanders, crowned with flowers, and waving goblets and garlands, burst from their retreats, upon each mountain peak a lion starts forward, stretches his proud tail, and, bellowing to the sun, scours back exulting to his forest—immense bodies, which before would have been mistaken for the trunks of trees, now move into life; and serpents, untwining their green and glittering folds, and slowly bending their crested heads around, seem proudly conscious of a voluptuous existence—troops of monkeys leap from tree to tree—panthers start forward, and alarmed, not alarming, instantly vanish—a herd of milk-white elephants tramples over the back-ground of the scene; and instead of gloomy owls and noxious beetles, to hail the long-enduring twilight, from the bell of every opening flower, beautiful birds, radiant with every rainbow tint, rush with a long and living melody into the cool air.

The twilight in this island is not that transient moment of unearthly bliss, which, in our less favoured regions, always leaves us so thoughtful and so sad; on the contrary, it lasts many hours, and consequently the Islanders are neither moody nor sorrowful. As they sleep during the day, four or five hours of “tipsy dance and revelry” are exercise and not fatigue. At length, even in this delightful region, the rosy tint fades into purple, and the purple into blue—the white moon gleams, and at length glitters,—and the invisible stars first creep into light, and then blaze into radiancy. But no hateful dews discolour their loveliness; and so clear is the air, that instead of the false appearance of a studded vault, the celestial bodies may be seen floating in æther, at various distances and of various tints. Ere the showery fire-flies have ceased to shine, and the blue lights to play about the tremulous

horizon—amidst the voices of a thousand birds, the dancers solace themselves with the rarest fruits, the most delicate fish, and the most delicious wines: but flesh they love not. They are an innocent and a happy, though a voluptuous and ignorant race. They have no manufactures, no commerce, no agriculture, and no printing-presses: but for their slight clothing they wear the bright skins of serpents—for corn, Nature gives them the bread-fruit—and for intellectual amusement, they have a pregnant fancy and a ready wit—tell inexhaustible stories, and always laugh at each other's jokes. A natural instinct gave them the art of making wine; and it was the same benevolent Nature that blessed them also with the knowledge of the art of making love. But time flies even here. The lovely companions have danced, and sung, and banqueted, and laughed—what further bliss remains for man? They rise, and in pairs wander about the island, and then to their bowers: their life ends with the Night they love so well; and ere Day, the everlasting conqueror, wave his flaming standard in the luminous East, solitude and silence will again reign in the ISLE OF FANTASIE.

CHAPTER II.

THE last and loudest chorus had died away, and the Islanders were pouring forth their libation to their great enemy the Sun, when suddenly a vast obscurity spread over the glowing West. They looked at each other, and turned pale, and the wine from their trembling goblets fell useless on the shore. The women were too frightened to scream, and, for the first time in the Isle of Fantaisie, silence existed after sunset. They were encouraged when they observed that the darkness ceased at that point in the heavens which overlooked their coral rocks; and perceiving that their hitherto unsullied sky was pure, even at this moment of otherwise universal gloom, the men regained their colour, touched the goblets with their lips, further to reanimate themselves; and the women, now less discomposed, uttered loud shrieks.

Suddenly the wind roared with unaccustomed rage, the sea rose into large billows, and a ship was seen tossing in the offing. The Islanders, whose experience of navigation extended only to a slight paddling in their lagoon, in the half of a hollow trunk of a

tree, for the purpose of fishing, mistook the tight little frigate for a great fish; and being now aware of the cause of this disturbance, and at the same time feeling confident that the monster could never make way through the shallow waters to the island, they perfectly recovered their courage; and gazed upon the labouring leviathan with the same interested nonchalance, with which students at a modern lecture observe an expounding philosopher.

“What a shadow he casts over the sky!” said the King, a young man, whose divine right was never questioned by his female subjects. “What a commotion in the waters, and what a wind he snorts forth! It certainly must be the largest fish that exists. I remember my father telling me that a monstrous fish once got entangled among our rocks, and this part of the island really smelt for a month; I cannot help fancying that there is a rather odd smell now—pah!”

A favourite Queen flew to the suffering monarch, and pressing her aromatic lips upon his offended nostrils, his Majesty recovered.

The unhappy crew of the frigate, who, with the aid of their telescopes, had detected the crowds upon the shore, now fired their signal guns of distress, which came sullenly booming through the wind.

“Oh! the great fish is speaking!” was the universal exclamation.

“I begin to get frightened,” said the favourite Queen. “I am sure the monster is coming here!” So saying, her Majesty grasped up a handful of pearls from the shore, to defend herself.

As screaming was now the fashion, all the women of course screamed; and animated by the example of their sovereign, and armed with the marine gems, the Amazons assumed a very imposing attitude.

Just at the moment that they had worked up their enthusiasm to the highest pitch, and were actually desirous of dying for their country—the ship sunk.

CHAPTER III.

It is the flush of noon; and, strange to say, a human figure is seen wandering on the shore of the Isle of Fantaisie.

“One of the crew of the wrecked frigate, of course? What

an escape! Fortunate creature! interesting man! Probably the indefatigable Captain Parry,—possibly the undaunted Captain Franklin,—perhaps the adventurous Captain Lyon!”

No! sweet blue-eyed girl! my plots are not of that extremely guessable nature, so admired by your adorable sex. Indeed, this book is so constructed, that if you were even, according to custom, to commence its perusal by reading the last page, you would not gain the slightest assistance in finding out “how the story ends.”

The wanderer belongs to no frigate-building nation. He is a true Fantaisian; who having, in his fright, during yesterday's storm, lost the lock of hair which, in a moment of glorious favour, he had ravished from his fair mistress's brow, is now, after a sleepless night, tracing every remembered haunt of yesterday, with the fond hope of regaining his most precious treasure. Ye Gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease, know full well the anxiety and exertion, the days of management, and the nights of meditation, which the rape of a lock requires, and you can consequently sympathize with the agitated feelings of the handsome and the hapless Popanilla.

The favourite of all the women, the envy of all the men, Popanilla passed an extremely pleasant life. No one was a better judge of wine—no one had a better taste for fruit—no one danced with more elegant vivacity—and no one whispered compliments in a more meaning tone. His stories ever had a point—his repartees were never ill-natured. What a pity that such an amiable fellow should have got into such a scrape!

In spite of his grief, however, Popanilla soon found that the ardency of his passion evaporated under a smoking sun; and, exhausted, he was about to return home from his fruitless search, when his attention was attracted by a singular appearance. He observed before him, on the shore, a square, and hitherto unseen form. He watched it for some minutes, but it was motionless. He drew nearer, and observed it with intense attention; but if it were a being, it certainly was fast asleep. He approached close to its side, but it neither moved nor breathed. He applied his nose to the mysterious body, and the elegant Fantaisian drew back immediately from a most villanous smell of pitch. Not to excite too much, in this calm age, the reader's curiosity, let him know at once, that this strange substance was a sea-chest. Upon it was marked, in large black letters, S. D. K. No. 1.

For the first time in his life, Popanilla experienced a feeling of overwhelming curiosity. His fatigue, his loss, the scorching hour, and the possible danger, were all forgotten, in an indefinite feeling that the body possessed contents more interesting than its unpromising exterior, and in a resolute determination that the development of the mystery should be reserved only for himself.

Although he felt assured that he must be unseen, he could not refrain from throwing a rapid glance of anxiety around him. It was a moment of perfect stillness: the island slept in sunshine, and even the waves had ceased to break over the opposing rocks. A thousand strange and singular thoughts rushed into his mind, but his first purpose was ever uppermost; and at length, unfolding his girdle of skin, he tied the tough cincture round the chest, and exerting all his powers, dragged his mysterious waif into the nearest wood.

But during this operation the top fell off, and revealed the neatest collection of little packages that ever pleased the eye of the admirer of spruce arrangement. Popanilla took up packets upon all possible subjects; smelt them, but they were not savory; he was sorely puzzled. At last, he lighted on a slender volume bound in brown calf, which, with the confined but sensual notions of a savage, he mistook for gingerbread, at least. It was "The Universal Linguist, by Mr. Hamilton, or, the Art of Dreaming in Languages."

No sooner had Popanilla passed that well-formed nose, which had been so often admired by the lady whose lock of hair he had unfortunately lost, a few times over a few pages of the Hamiltonian System, than he sank upon his bed of flowers: and, in spite of his curiosity, was instantly overcome by a profound slumber. But his slumber, though deep, was not peaceful, and he was the actor in an agitating drama.

He found himself alone in a gay and glorious garden. In the centre of it grew a pomegranate tree of prodigious size; its top was lost in the sky, and its innumerable branches sprang out in all directions, covered with large fruit of a rich golden hue. The most beautiful birds were perched upon all parts of the tree, and chanted with perpetual melody the beauties of their bower. Tempted by the delicious sight, Popanilla stretched forward his ready hand to pluck; but no sooner had he grasped the fruit, than the music immediately ceased—the birds rushed away—the

sky darkened—the tree fell under the wind—the garden vanished, and Popanilla found himself in the midst of a raging sea, buffeting the waves.

He would certainly have been drowned, had he not been immediately swallowed up by the huge monster, which had not only been the occasion of the storm of yesterday, but,—ah! most unhappy business!—been the occasion also of his losing that lock of hair.

Ere he could congratulate himself on his escape, he found fresh cause for anxiety, for he perceived that he was no longer alone. No friends were near him; but, on the contrary, he was surrounded by strangers of a far different aspect. They were men certainly—that is to say, they had legs and arms, and heads, and bodies as himself—but instead of that bloom of youth, that regularity of feature, that amiable joyousness of countenance, which he had ever been accustomed to meet and to love in his former companions, he recoiled in horror from the swarthy complexions, the sad visages, and the haggard features of his present ones. They spoke to him in a harsh and guttural accent. He would have fled from their advances, but then,—he was in the belly of a whale! When he had become a little used to their tones, he was gratified by finding that their attentions were far from hostile; and, after having received from them a few compliments, he began to think that they were not quite so ugly. He discovered that the object of their inquiries was the fatal pomegranate which still remained in his hand. They admired its beauty, and told him that they greatly esteemed an individual who possessed such a mass of precious ore. Popanilla begged to undeceive them, and courteously presented the fruit. No sooner, however, had he parted with this apple of discord, than the countenances of his companions changed. Immediately discovering its real nature, they loudly accused Popanilla of having deceived them; he remonstrated, and they recriminated; and the great fish, irritated by their clamour, lashed its huge tail, and with one efficacious vomit, spouted the innocent Popanilla high in the air. He fell with such a dash into the waves, that he was awakened by the sound of his own fall.

The dreamer awoke amidst real chattering, and scuffling, and clamour. A troop of green monkeys had been aroused by his unusual occupation, and had taken the opportunity of his slumber to become acquainted with some of the first principles of science.

What progress they had made it is difficult to ascertain; because, each one throwing a tract at Popanilla's head, they immediately disappeared. It is said, however, that some monkeys have been since seen skipping about the island, with their tails cut off; and that they have even succeeded in passing themselves off for human beings among those people who do not read novels, and are consequently unacquainted with mankind.

The morning's adventure immediately rushed into Popanilla's mind, and he proceeded forthwith to examine the contents of his chest; but with advantages which had not been yet enjoyed by those who had previously peeped into it. The monkeys had not been composed to sleep by the "Universal Linguist" of Mr. Hamilton. As for Popanilla, he took up a treatise on hydrostatics, and read it straight through on the spot. For the rest of the day he was hydrostatically mad; nor could the commonest incident connected with the action or conveyance of water take place, without his speculating on its cause and consequence.

So enraptured was Popanilla with his new accomplishments and acquirements, that by degrees he avoided attendance on the usual evening assemblages, and devoted himself solely to the acquirement of useful knowledge. After a short time his absence was remarked; but the greatest and the most gifted has only to leave his coterie, called the world, for a few days, to be fully convinced of what very slight importance he really is. And so Popanilla, the delight of society, and the especial favourite of the women, was, in a very short time, not even inquired after. At first, of course, they supposed that he was in love, or that he had a slight cold, or that he was writing his memoirs; and as these suppositions, in due course, take their place in the annals of society as circumstantial histories, in about a week, one knew the lady, another had heard him sneeze, and a third had seen the manuscript. At the end of another week, Popanilla was forgotten.

CHAPTER IV.

Six months had elapsed since the first chest of the cargo of Useful Knowledge, destined for the fortunate Maldives, had been digested by the recluse Popanilla; for a recluse he had now be-

come. Great students are rather dull companions. Our Fantaisian friend, during his first studies, was as moody, absent, and querulous, as are most men of genius during that mystical period of life. He was consequently avoided by the men, and quizzed by the women; and consoled himself for the neglect of the first, and the taunts of the second, by the indefinite sensation, that he should, some day or other, turn out that little being, called a great man. As for his mistress, she considered herself insulted by being addressed by a man who had lost her lock of hair. When the chest was exhausted, Popanilla was seized with a profound melancholy. Nothing depresses a man's spirits more completely than a self-conviction of self-conceit; and Popanilla, who had been accustomed to consider himself and his companions as the most elegant portion of the visible creation, now discovered, with dismay, that he and his fellow Islanders were nothing more than a horde of useless savages.

This mortification, however, was soon succeeded by a proud consciousness, that he, at any rate, was now civilised; and that proud consciousness, by a fond hope, that in a short time he might become a civiliser. Like all projectors, he was not of a sanguine temperament; but he did trust, that in the course of another season, the Isle of Fantaisie might take its station among the nations. He was determined, however, not to be too rapid. It cannot be expected that ancient prejudices can, in a moment, be eradicated, and new modes of conduct instantaneously substituted and established. Popanilla, like a wise man, determined to conciliate. His views were to be as liberal, as his principles were enlightened. Men should be forced to do nothing. Bigotry, and intolerance, and persecution, were the objects of his most decided disapprobation; resembling, in this particular, all the great and good men who have ever existed; who have invariably maintained this opinion, so long as they have been in the minority.

Popanilla appeared once more in the world.

"Dear me! is that you, Pop?" exclaimed the ladies. "What have you been doing with yourself all this time? Travelling, I suppose. Every one travels now. Really you travelled men get quite bores. And where did you get that coat—if it be a coat?"

Such was the style in which the Fantaisian females saluted the long absent Popanilla: and really when a man shuts himself up from the world for a considerable time, and fancies that in con-

descending to re-enter it, he has surely the right to expect the homage due to a superior being, these salutations are awkward. The ladies of England peculiarly excel in this species of annihilation; and while they continue to drown puppies, as they daily do, in a sea of sarcasm, I think no true Englishman will hesitate one moment in giving them the preference for tact and manner, over all the vivacious French, all the self-possessing Italian, and all the tolerant German women. This is a clap-trap, and I have no doubt will sell the book.

Popanilla, however, had not re-entered society with the intention of subsiding into a nonentity; and he therefore took the opportunity, a few minutes after sunset, just as his companions were falling into the dance, to beg the favour of being allowed to address his Sovereign—only for one single moment.

“Sire!” said he, in that mild tone of subdued superciliousness with which we should always address kings, and which, while it vindicates our dignity, so satisfactorily proves that we are above the vulgar passion of envy—“Sire!”—but let us not encourage that fatal faculty of oratory so dangerous to free states, and therefore let us give only the “substance of Popanilla’s speech.”* He commenced his address in a manner somewhat resembling the initial observations of those pleasing pamphlets, which are the fashion of the present hour; and which being intended to diffuse information among those who have not enjoyed the opportunity and advantages of study, and are consequently of a gay and cheerful disposition, treat of light subjects in a light and polished style. Popanilla, therefore, spoke of man in a savage state, the origin of society, and the elements of the social compact, in sentences which would not have disgraced the mellifluous pen of Bentham. From these, he naturally digressed into an agreeable disquisition on the Anglo-Saxons; and after a little badinage on the Bill of Rights, flew off to an airy *aperçu* of the French Revolution. When he had arrived at the Isle of Fantaisie, he begged to inform his Majesty, that man was born for something else besides enjoying himself. It was, doubtless, extremely pleasant to dance and sing, to crown themselves with chaplets, and to drink wine; but he was ‘free to confess,’ that he did not imagine, that the most

* *Substance of a speech*, in Parliamentary language, means a printed edition of an harangue which contains all that was uttered in the House, and about as much again.

barefaced hireling of corruption could for a moment presume to maintain that there was any utility in pleasure. If there were no utility in pleasure, it was quite clear that pleasure could profit no one. If, therefore, it were unprofitable, it was injurious; because that which does not produce a profit, is equivalent to a loss—therefore, pleasure is a losing business; consequently, pleasure is not pleasant.

He also showed that man was not born for himself, but for society; that the interests of the body are alone to be considered, and not those of the individual; and that a nation might be extremely happy, extremely powerful, and extremely rich, although every individual member of it might at the same time be miserable, dependent, and in debt. He regretted to observe, that no one in the island seemed in the slightest degree conscious of the object of his being. Man is created for a purpose; the object of his existence is to perfect himself. Man is imperfect by nature, because if nature had made him perfect he would have had no wants; and it is only by supplying his wants, that utility can be developed. The development of utility is therefore the object of our being, and the attainment of this great end the cause of our existence. This principle clears all doubts, and rationally accounts for a state of existence which has puzzled many pseudo-philosophers.

Popanilla then went on to show that the hitherto received definitions of man were all erroneous; that man is neither a walking animal, nor a talking animal, nor a cooking animal, nor a lounging animal, nor a debt-incurring animal, nor a tax-paying animal, nor a printing animal, nor a puffing animal, but a *developing animal*. Development is the discovery of utility. By developing the water, we get fish; by developing the earth, we get corn, and cash, and cotton; by developing the air, we get breath; by developing the fire, we get heat. Thus, the use of the elements is demonstrated to the meanest capacity. But it was not merely a material development to which he alluded—a moral development was equally indispensable. He showed that it was impossible for a nation either to think too much, or to do too much. The life of man was therefore to be passed in a moral and material development, until he had consummated his perfection. It was the opinion of Popanilla that this great result was by no means so near at hand as some philosophers flattered themselves; and that it might possibly

require another half-century before even the most civilised nation could be said to have completed the destiny of the human race. At the same time, he intimated that there were various extraordinary means by which this rather desirable result might be facilitated; and there was no saying what the building of a new University might do, of which, when built, he had no objection to be appointed Principal.

In answer to those who affect to admire that deficient system of existence which they style simplicity of manners, and who are perpetually committing the blunder of supposing that every advance towards perfection only withdraws man further from his primitive and proper condition, Popanilla triumphantly demonstrated, that no such order as that which they associated with the phrase, "state of nature," ever existed. "Man," said he, "is called the master-piece of nature; and man is also, as we all know, the most curious of machines: now, a machine is a work of art, consequently, the masterpiece of nature is the masterpiece of art. The object of all mechanism is the attainment of utility; the object of man, who is the most perfect machine, is utility in the highest degree. Can we believe, therefore, that this machine was ever intended for a state which never could have called forth its powers—a state in which no utility could ever have been attained—a state in which there are no wants; consequently, no demand; consequently, no supply; consequently, no competition; consequently, no invention; consequently, no profits; only one great pernicious monopoly of comfort and ease? Society without wants, is like a world without winds. It is quite clear, therefore, that there is no such thing as Nature; Nature is Art, or Art is Nature; that which is most useful is most natural, because utility is the test of nature; therefore, a steam-engine is in fact a much more natural production than a mountain.*

"You are convinced therefore," he continued, "by these observations, that it is impossible for an individual or a nation to be too

* The age seems as anti-mountainous as it is anti-monarchical. A late writer insinuates that if the English had spent their millions in levelling the Andes, instead of excavating the table-lands, society might have been benefited. These monstrosities are decidedly useless, and therefore can neither be sublime nor beautiful, as has been unanswerably demonstrated by another recent writer on political æsthetics.—See also a personal attack on Mont Blanc, in the second number of the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, 1828.

artificial in their manners, their ideas, their laws, or their general policy ; because, in fact, the more artificial you become, the nearer you approach that state of nature of which you are so perpetually talking.”—Here observing that some of his audience appeared to be a little sceptical—perhaps only surprised—he told them that what he said must be true, because it entirely consisted of first principles.*

After having thus preliminarily descanted for about two hours, Popanilla informed his Majesty that he was unused to public speaking, and then proceeded to show, that the grand characteristic of the social action† of the Isle of Fantaisie was a total want of development. This he observed with equal sorrow and surprise ; he respected the wisdom of their ancestors, at the same time no one could deny that they were both barbarous and ignorant ; he highly esteemed also the constitution, but regretted that it was not in the slightest degree adapted to the existing wants of society : he was not for destroying any establishments, but, on the contrary, was for courteously affording them the opportunity of self-dissolution. He finished, by re-urging, in very strong terms, the immediate development of the island. In the first place, a very great metropolis must be instantly built, because a very great metropolis always produces a very great demand ; and moreover, Popanilla had some legal doubts, whether a country without a capital could in fact be considered a State. Apologizing for having so long trespassed upon the attention of the assembly, he begged distinctly to state,‡ that he had no wish to see his Majesty and his fellow-subjects adopt these new principles without examination, and without experience. They might commence on a small scale ; let them cut down their forests, and by turning them into ships and houses, discover the utility of timber ; let the whole island be dug up ; let canals be cut, docks be built, and all the elephants be killed directly, that their teeth might yield an

* First principles are the ingredients of positive truth. They are immutable, as may be seen by comparing the first principles of the eighteenth century with the first principles of the nineteenth.

† This simple and definite phrase we derive from the nation to whom we were indebted during the last century for some other phrases about as definite, but rather more dangerous.

‡ Another phrase of Parliament, which, I need not observe, is always made use of in oratory, when the orator can see his meaning about as distinctly as Sancho perceived the charms of Dulcinea,

immediate article for exportation. A very short time would afford a sufficient trial. In the meanwhile, they would not be pledged to further measures, and these might be considered "only as an experiment."* Taking for granted, that these principles would be acted on, and taking into consideration the site of the island in the map of the world, the nature and extent of its resources, its magnificent race of human beings, its varieties of the animal creation, its wonderfully fine timber, its undeveloped mineral treasures, the spaciousness of its harbours, and its various facilities for extended international communication, Popanilla had no hesitation in saying, that a short time could not elapse, ere, instead of passing their lives in a state of unprofitable ease, and useless enjoyment, they might reasonably expect to be the terror and astonishment of the universe; and to be able to annoy every nation of any consequence.

Here, observing a smile upon his Majesty's countenance, Popanilla told the King that he was only a chief magistrate, and he had no more right to laugh at him than a parish constable. He concluded by observing, that although what he at present urged might appear very strange, nevertheless, if the listeners had been acquainted with the characters and cases of Galileo and Turgot, they would then have seen, as a necessary consequence, that his system was perfectly correct; and he, himself, a man of extraordinary merit.

Here the chief magistrate, no longer daring to smile, burst into a fit of laughter; and turning to his courtiers said, "I have not an idea what this man is talking about, but I know that he makes my head ache: give me a cup of wine, and let us have a dance."

All applauded the royal proposition; and pushing Popanilla from one to another, until he was fairly hustled to the very brink of the lagoon, they soon forgot the existence of this bore: in one word, he was cut. When Popanilla found himself standing alone, and looking very grave, while all the rest were very gay, he began to suspect that he was not so very influential a personage as he previously imagined. Rather crest-fallen, he sneaked home; and consoled himself for having nobody to speak to, by reading some very amusing "Conversations on Political Economy."

* A very famous and convenient phrase this—but in politics, *experiments* mean *revolutions*. 1828.

CHAPTER V.

POPANILLA was discomposed, but he was not discomfited. He consoled himself for the Royal neglect, by the recollection of the many illustrious men who had been despised, banished, imprisoned and burnt for the maintenance of opinions, which, centuries afterwards, had been discovered to be truth. He did not forget that in still further centuries, the lately recognised truth had been re-discovered to be falsehood; but then these men were not less illustrious; and what wonder that their opinions were really erroneous, since they were not his present ones? The reasoning was equally conclusive and consolatory. Popanilla, therefore, was not discouraged; and although he deemed it more prudent not to go out of his way to seek another audience of his sovereign, or to be too anxious again to address a public meeting, he nevertheless determined to proceed cautiously, but constantly, propagating his doctrines, and proselytizing in private.

Unfortunately for Popanilla, he did not enjoy one advantage, which all founders of sects have duly appreciated, and by which they have been materially assisted. It is a great and unanswerable argument in favour of a Providence, that we constantly perceive that the most beneficial results are brought about by the least worthy and most insignificant agents. The purest religions would never have been established, had they not been supported by sinners, who felt the burthen of the old faith; and the most free and enlightened governments are often generated by the discontented, the disappointed, and the dissolute. Now, in the Isle of Fantaisie, unfortunately for our revolutionizer, there was not a single grumbler.

Unable, therefore, to make the bad passions of his fellow-creatures the unconscious instruments of his good purposes, Popanilla must have been contented to have monopolised all the wisdom of the moderns, had he not, with the unbaffled wit of an inventor, hit upon a new expedient. Like Socrates, our philosopher began to cultivate with sedulousness the society of youth.

In a short time, the ladies of Fantaisie were forced to observe, that the fair sex most unfashionably predominated in their evening assemblages; for the young gentlemen of the island had

suddenly ceased to pay their graceful homage at the altar of Terpsichore. In an Indian isle, not to dance was as bad as heresy. The ladies rallied the recreants, but their playful sarcasms failed of their wonted effect. In the natural course of things, they had recourse to remonstrances, but their appeals were equally fruitless. The delicate creatures tried reproaches, but the boyish cynics received them with a scowl, and answered them with a sneer.

The women fled in indignation to their friendly monarch; but the voluptuary of nature only shrugged his shoulders, and smiled. He kissed away their tears, and their frowns vanished as he crowned their long hair with roses.

"If the lads really show such bad taste," said his Majesty, "why I and my Lords must do double duty—and dance with a couple of you at once." Consoled and complimented, and crowned by a King, who could look sad? The women forgot their anger in their increasing loyalty.

But the pupils of Popanilla had no sooner mastered the first principles of science, than they began to throw off their retired habits, and uncommunicative manners. Being not utterly ignorant of some of the rudiments of knowledge, and consequently having completed their education, it was now their duty, as members of society, to instruct and not to study. They, therefore, courted, instead of shunning, their fellow-creatures; and on all occasions seized all opportunities of assisting the spread of knowledge. The voices of lecturing boys resounded in every part of the island. Their tones were so shrill, their manners so presuming, their knowledge so crude, and their general demeanour so completely unamiable, that it was impossible to hear them without delight, advantage, and admiration.

The women were not now the only sufferers and the only complainants. Dinners to death, the men looked gloomy; and even the King, for the first time in his life, looked grave. Could this Babel, he thought, be that empire of bliss, that delightful Fantaisie; where, to be ruler, only proved, that you were the most skilful in making others happy! His brow ached under his light flowery crown, as if it were bound by the barbarous circle of a tyrant, heavy with gems and gold. In his despair, he had some thoughts of leaving his kingdom, and betaking himself to the mermaids.

The determination of the most precious portion of his subjects saved his empire. As the disciples of the new school were daily demanding, "What is the use of dancing?—what is the use of drinking wine?—what is the use of smelling flowers?"—the women, like prescient politicians, began to entertain a nervous suspicion, that in time, these sages might even presume to question the utility of that homage which, in spite of the Grecian Philosophers and the British Essayists, we have been in the habit of conceding to them ever since Eden; and they rushed again to the King, like frightened deer. Something now was to be done; and the monarch, with an expression of countenance which almost amounted to energy, whispered consolation.

The King sent for Popanilla; the message produced a great sensation; the enlightened introducer of the new principles had not been at Court since he was cut. No doubt his Majesty was at last impregnated with the liberal spirit of the age; and Popanilla was assuredly to be Premier. In fact, it must be so—he was "sent for"—there was no precedent in Fantaisie, though there might be in other islands, for a person being "sent for," and not being Premier. His disciples were in high spirits; the world was now to be regulated upon right principles, and they were to be installed into their right places.

"Illustrious Popanilla!" said the King, "you once did me the honour of making me a speech; which, unfortunately for myself, I candidly confess, I was then utterly incapable of understanding—no wonder, as it was the first I ever heard: I shall not, however, easily forget the effect which it produced upon me. I have since considered it my duty, as a monarch, to pay the most particular attention to your suggestions. I now understand them with sufficient clearness to be fully convinced of their excellence, and in future I intend to act upon them, without any exception or deviation. To prove my sincerity, I have determined to commence the new system at once; and as I think that, without some extension of our international relations, the commercial interest of this island will be utterly incapable of furnishing the taxes which I intend to levy, I have determined, therefore, to fit out an expedition for the purpose of discovering new islands, and forming relations with new islanders. It is but due to your merit that you should be appointed to the command of it; and further

to testify my infinite esteem for your character, and my complete confidence in your abilities, I make you post-captain on the spot. As the axiom of your school seems to be, that every thing can be made perfect at once, without time, without experience, without practice, and without preparation, I have no doubt, with the aid of a treatise or two, you will make a consummate naval commander, although you have never been at sea in the whole course of your life—Farewell, Captain Popanilla!”

No sooner was this adieu uttered, than four brawny lords of the bed-chamber seized the Turgot of Fantaisie by the shoulders, and carried him with inconceivable rapidity to the shore. His pupils, who would have fled to his rescue, were stifled with the embraces of their former partners; and their utilitarianism dissolved in the arms of those they once so rudely rejected. As for their tutor, he was thrust into one of the canoes, with some fresh water, bread fruit, dried fish, and a basket of alligator-pears. A band of mermaids carried the canoe, with exquisite management, through the shallows, and over the breakers; and poor Popanilla, in a few minutes, found himself out at sea. Tremendously frightened, he offered to recant all his opinions, and denounce, as traitors, any individuals whom the Court might select. But his former companions did not exactly detect the utility of his return. His offers, his supplications, were equally fruitless; and the only answer which floated to him on the wind, was, “Farewell, Captain Popanilla!”

CHAPTER VI.

NIGHT fell upon the waters, dark and drear, and thick and misty. How unlike those brilliant hours that once summoned him to revelry and love! Unhappy Popanilla! Thy delicious Fantaisie has vanished! Ah, pitiable youth! What could possibly have induced you to be so very rash? And all from that unlucky lock of hair!

After a few natural paroxysms of rage, terror, anguish, and remorse, the captain as naturally subsided into despair; and awaited with sullen apathy that fate which could not be far distant. The only thing which puzzled the philosophical navigator, was his in-

ability to detect what useful end could be attained by his death. At length, remembering that fish must be fed, his theory and his desperation were at the same time confirmed.

A clear dry morning succeeded the wet gloomy night; and Popanilla had not yet gone down. This extraordinary suspension of his fate roused him from his stupor, and between the consequent excitement and the morning air, he acquired an appetite. Philosophical physicians appear to have agreed that sorrow, to a certain extent, is not unfavourable to digestion; and as Popanilla began to entertain some indefinite and unreasonable hopes, the alligator-pears quickly disappeared. In the meantime the little canoe cut her way, as if she were chasing a smuggler; and had it not been for a shark or two, who, in anticipation of their services being required, never left her side for a second, Popanilla really might have made some very ingenious observations on the nature of tides. He was rather surprised certainly, as he watched his frail bark cresting the waves; but he soon supposed that this was all in the natural course of things; and he now ascribed his previous fright, not to the peril of his situation, but to his inexperience of it.

Although his apprehension of being drowned was now removed, yet when he gazed on the boundless vacancy before him, and also observed that his provisions rapidly decreased, he began to fear that he was destined for a still more horrible fate, and that after having eaten his own shoes, he must submit to be starved. In this state of despondency, with infinite delight and exultation he clearly observed, on the second day, at twenty-seven minutes past three, P.M., though at a considerable distance, a mountain and an island. His joy and his pride were equal, and excessive: he called the first, Alligator Mountain, in gratitude to the pears; and christened the second after his mistress—that unlucky mistress! The swift canoe soon reached the discoveries, and the happy discoverer further found, to his utter mortification, that the mountain was a mist, and the island a sea-weed. Popanilla now grew sulky, and threw himself down in the bottom of his boat.

On the third morning, he was awakened by a tremendous roar; on looking around him, he perceived that he was in a valley formed by two waves, each several hundred feet high. This seemed the crisis of his fate; he shut his eyes, as people do when they are touched by a dentist, and in a few minutes was still

bounding on the ocean in the eternal canoe, safe but senseless. Some tremendous peals of thunder, a roaring wind, and a scathing lightning, confirmed his indisposition; and had not the tempest subsided, Popanilla would probably have been an idiot for life. The dead and soothing calm which succeeded this tornado called him back again gradually to existence. He opened his eyes, and scarcely daring to try a sense, immediately shut them; then heaving a deep sigh, he shrugged his shoulders, and looked as pitiable as a Prime Minister with a rebellious Cabinet. At length he ventured to lift up his head; there was not a wrinkle on the face of ocean; a halcyon fluttered over him, and then scudded before his canoe, and gamesome porpoises were tumbling at his side. The sky was cloudless, except in the direction to which he was driving; but even as Popanilla observed, with some misgivings, the mass of vapours which had there congregated, the great square and solid black clouds drew off like curtains, and revealed to his entranced vision a magnificent city rising out of the sea.

Tower, and dome, and arch, column, and spire, and obelisk, and lofty terraces, and many-windowed palaces, rose in all directions from a mass of building which appeared to him each instant to grow more huge, till at length it seemed to occupy the whole horizon. The sun lent additional lustre to the dazzling quays of white marble, which apparently surrounded this mighty city, and which rose immediately from the dark blue waters. As the navigator drew nearer, he observed that in most parts the quays were crowded with beings, who, he trusted, were human, and already the hum of multitudes broke upon his inexperienced ear; to him a sound far more mysterious and far more exciting than the most poetical of winds to the most windy of poets. On the right of this vast city rose what was mistaken by Popanilla for an immense but leafless forest; but more practical men than the Fantaisian Captain have been equally confounded by the first sight of a million of masts.

The canoe cut its way with increased rapidity; and ere Popanilla had recovered himself sufficiently to make even an ejaculation, he found himself at the side of a quay. Some amphibious creatures, whom he supposed to be mermen, immediately came to his assistance, rather stared at his serpent-skin coat, and then helped him up the steps. Popanilla was instantly surrounded.

"Who are you?" said one.

"What are you?" asked another.

“Who is it?” exclaimed a third.

“What is it?” screamed a fourth.

“My friends, I am a man!”

“A man!” said the women; “are you sure you are a real man?”

“He must be a sea-god!” said the females.

“She must be a sea-goddess,” said the males.

“A Triton!” maintained the women.

“A Nereid!” argued the men.

“It is a great fish!” said the boys.

Thanks to the Universal Linguist, Captain Popanilla, under these peculiar circumstances, was more loquacious than could have been Captain Parry.

“Good people! you see before you the most injured of human beings.”

This announcement inspired general enthusiasm. The women wept, the men shook hands with him, and all the boys huzzaed. Popanilla proceeded:—

“Actuated by the most pure, the most patriotic, the most noble, the most enlightened, and the most useful sentiments, I aspired to ameliorate the condition of my fellow men. To this grand object I have sacrificed all that makes life delightful: I have lost my station in society, my taste for dancing, my popularity with the men, my favour with the women; and last, but, oh! not least (excuse this emotion), I have lost a very particular lock of hair. In one word, my friends, you see before you—banished, ruined, and unhappy—the victim of a despotic sovereign, a corrupt aristocracy, and a misguided people.”

No sooner had he ceased speaking than Popanilla really imagined that he had only escaped the dangers of sedition and the sea, to expire by less hostile, though not less effective means. To be strangled was not much better than to be starved: and certainly with half-a-dozen highly respectable females clinging round his neck, he was not reminded, for the first time in his life, what a domestic bow-string is an affectionate woman. In an agony of suffocation he thought very little of his arms, although the admiration of the men had already, in his imagination, separated those useful members from his miserable body; and had it not been for some justifiable kicking and plunging, the veneration of the ingenuous and surrounding youth, which manifested itself

by their active exertions to divide his singular garment into relics of a martyr of liberty, would soon have effectually prevented the ill-starred Popanilla from being again mistaken for a Nereid. Order was at length restored, and a committee of eight appointed to regulate the visits of the increasing mob.

The arrangements were judicious; the whole populace was marshalled into ranks; classes of twelve persons were allowed consecutively to walk past the victim of tyranny, corruption, and ignorance; and each person had the honour to touch his finger. During this proceeding, which lasted a few hours, an influential personage generously offered to receive the eager subscriptions of the assembled thousands. Even the boys subscribed, and ere six hours had passed since his arrival as a coatless vagabond in this liberal city, Captain Popanilla found himself a person of considerable income.

The receiver of the subscriptions, while he crammed Popanilla's serpent-skin pockets full of gold pieces, at the same time kindly offered the stranger to introduce him to an hotel. Popanilla, who was quite beside himself, could only bow his assent, and mechanically accompanied his conductor. When he had regained his faculty of speech, he endeavoured, in wandering sentences of grateful incoherency, to express his deep sense of this unparalleled liberality. "It was an excess of generosity, in which mankind could never have before indulged!"

"By no means!" said his companion, with great coolness; "far from this being an unparalleled affair, I assure you it is a matter of hourly occurrence: make your mind quite easy. You are probably not aware that you are now living in the richest and the most charitable country in the world!"

"Wonderful!" said Popanilla; "and what is the name, may I ask, of this charitable city?"

"Is it possible," said his companion, with a faint smile, "that you are ignorant of the great city of Hubbabub—the largest city, not only that exists, but that ever did exist, and the capital of the island of Vraibleusia, the most famous island, not only that is known, but that ever was known!"

While he was speaking, they were accosted by a man upon crutches, who telling them in a broken voice that he had a wife and twelve infant children dependent on his support, supplicated a little charity. Popanilla was about to empty part of his pocket-

fuls into the mendicant's cap, but his companion repressed his unphilosophical facility. "By no means!" said his friend, who, turning round to the beggar, advised him, in a mild voice, to *work*; calmly adding, that if he presumed to ask charity again, he should certainly have him bastinadoed. Then they walked on.

Popanilla's attention was so distracted by the variety, the number, the novelty, and the noise of the objects which were incessantly hurried upon his observation, that he found no time to speak; and as his companion, though exceedingly polite, was a man of few words, conversation rather flagged.

At last, overwhelmed by the magnificence of the streets, the splendour of the shops, the number of human beings, the rattling of the vehicles, the dashing of the horses, and a thousand other sounds and objects, Popanilla gave loose to a loud and fervent wish that his hotel might have the good fortune of being situated in this interesting quarter.

"By no means!" said his companion, "we have yet much further to go. Far from this being a desirable situation for you, my friend, no civilised person is ever seen here; and had not the cause of civil and religious liberty fortunately called me to the water-side to-day, I should have lost the opportunity of showing how greatly I esteem a gentleman who has suffered so severely in the cause of national amelioration."

"Sir!" said Popanilla, "your approbation is the only reward which I ever shall desire for my exertions. You will excuse me for not quite keeping up with you; but the fact is, my pockets are so stuffed with cash, that the action of my legs is greatly impeded."

"Credit me, my friend! that you are suffering from an inconvenience which you will not long experience in Hubbabub. Nevertheless, to remedy it at present, I think the best thing we can do is to buy a purse."

They accordingly entered a shop where such an article might be found, and taking up a small sack, for Popanilla was very rich, his companion inquired its price, which he was informed was four crowns. No sooner had the desired information been given than the proprietor of the opposite shop rushed in, and offered him the same article for three crowns. The original merchant, not at all surprised at the intrusion, and not the least apologising for his former extortion, then demanded two. His rival, being more than

his match, he courteously dropped upon his knee, and requested his customer to accept the article gratis, for his sake. The generous dealer would infallibly have carried the day, had not his rival humbly supplicated the purchaser, not only to receive his article as a gift, but also the compliment of a crown inside.

"What a terrible cheat the first merchant must have been!" said the puzzled Popanilla, as they proceeded on their way.

"By no means!" said his calm companion; "the purse was sufficiently cheap, even at four crowns. This is not Cheatery, this is Competition!"

"What a wonderful nation, then, this must be, where you not only get purses gratis, but even well loaded! What use, then, is all this heavy gold? It is a tremendous trouble to carry;—I will empty the bag into this kennel, for money surely can be of no use in a city where, when in want of cash, you have only to go into a shop and buy a purse!"

"Your pardon!" said his companion; "far from this being the case, Vraibleusia is, without doubt, the dearest country in the world."

"If then," said the inquisitive Popanilla, with great animation—"if then this country be the dearest in the world—if—how—"

"My good friend!" said his companion, "I really am the last person in the world to answer questions. All that I know is, that this country is extremely dear, and that the only way to get things cheap is to encourage Competition."

Here the progress of the companions was impeded for some time by a great crowd, which had assembled to catch a glimpse of a man who was to fly off a steeple, but who had not yet arrived. A chimney-sweeper observed to a scientific friend, that probably the density of the atmosphere might prevent the intended volitation; and Popanilla, who, having read almost as many pamphlets as the observer, now felt quite at home, exceedingly admired the observation.

"He must be a very superior man, this gentleman in black!" said Popanilla to his companion.

"By no means! he is of the very lowest class in society. But you are probably not aware that you are in the most educated country in the world."

"Delightful!" said Popanilla.

The Captain was exceedingly desirous of witnessing the flight

of the Vraibleusian Dædalus, but his friend advised their progress. This, however, was not very easy; and Popanilla, animated, for the moment, by his natural aristocratic disposition, and emboldened by his superior size and strength, began to clear his way in a manner which was more cogent than logical. The chimney-sweeper and his comrades were soon in arms, and Popanilla would certainly have been killed or ducked by this very superior man and his friends, had it not been for the mild remonstrance of his conductor, and the singular appearance of his costume.

"What could have induced you to be so very imprudent?" said his rescuer, when they had escaped from the crowd.

"Truly," said Popanilla, "I thought that in a country where you may bastinado the wretch who presumes to ask you for alms, there could surely be no objection to my knocking down the scoundrel who dared to stand in my way."

"By no means!" said his friend, slightly elevating his eyebrows. "Here all men are equal. You are probably not aware that you are at present in the freest country in the world."

"I do not exactly understand you; what is this freedom?"

"My good friend! I really am the last person in the world to answer questions. Freedom is, in one word—Liberty: a kind of thing which you foreigners never can understand, and which mere theory can make no man understand. When you have been in the island a few weeks, all will be quite clear to you. In the meantime, do as others do, and never knock men down!"

CHAPTER VII.

"ALTHOUGH we are yet some way from our hotel," remarked Popanilla's conductor, "we have now arrived at a part of the city where I can ease you, without difficulty, from your troublesome burthen; let us enter here!"

As he spoke, they stopped before a splendid palace, and proceeding through various halls full of individuals apparently intently busied, the companions were at last ushered into an apartment of smaller size, but of more elegant character. A personage of prepossessing appearance was lolling on a couch of an appearance

equally prepossessing. Before him, on a table, were some papers, exquisite fruits, and some liqueurs. Popanilla was presented, and received, with fascinating complaisance. His friend stated the object of their visit, and handed the sackful of gold to the gentleman on the sofa. The gentleman on the sofa ordered a couple of attendants to ascertain its contents. While this computation was going on, he amused his guests by his lively conversation, and charmed Popanilla by his polished manners, and easy civility. He offered him, during his stay in Vraibleusia, the use of a couple of equipages, a villa, and an opera-box; insisted upon sending to his hotel some pine-apples, and some very rare wine; and gave him a perpetual ticket to his picture-gallery. When his attendants had concluded their calculation, he ordered them to place Popanilla's precious metal in his treasury; and then presenting the Captain with a small packet of pink shells, he kindly inquired whether he could be of any further use to him. Popanilla was very loth to retire without his gold, of the utility of which, in spite of the conveniency of competition, he seemed to possess an instinctive conception; but as his friend rose and withdrew, he could do nothing less than accompany him; for having now known him nearly half a day, his confidence in his honour and integrity was naturally unbounded.

"That was the king, of course?" said Popanilla, when they were fairly out of the palace.

"The king!" said the unknown, nearly surprised into an exclamation—"by no means!"

"And what then?"

"My good friend! is it possible that you have no bankers in your country?"

"Yes, it is very possible; but we have mermaids, who also give us shells which are very pretty. What then are your bankers?"

"Really, my good friend! that is a question which I never remember having been asked before; but a banker is a man who—keeps our money for us."

"Ah! and he is bound, I suppose, to return your money when you choose."

"Most assuredly!"

"He is then, in fact, your servant: you must pay him handsomely, for him to live so well?"

"By no means! we pay him nothing."

“That is droll, he must be very rich then?”

“Really, my dear friend! I cannot say.—Why yes! I—I suppose, he may be very rich!”

“’Tis singular, that a rich man should take so much trouble for others!”

“My good friend! of course, he lives by his trouble.”

“Ah! How then,” continued the inquisitive Fantaisian, “if you do not pay him for his services, and he yet lives by them, how, I pray, does he acquire these immense riches?”

“Really, my good sir, I am, in truth, the very last man in the world to answer questions: he is a banker—bankers are always rich—but why they are, or how they are, I really never had time to inquire. But I suppose, if the truth were known, they must have very great opportunities.”

“Ah! I begin to see,” said Popanilla.—“It was really very kind of him,” continued the Captain, “to make me a present of these little pink shells: what would I not now give to turn them into a necklace, and send it to a certain person at Fantaisie!”

“It would be a very expensive necklace,” observed his companion, almost surprised. “I had no idea, I confess, from your appearance, that in your country they indulged in such expensive tastes in costume.”

“Expensive?” said Popanilla. “We certainly have no such shells as these in Fantaisie; but we have much more beautiful ones—I should think, from their look, they must be rather common.”

His conductor, for the first time, nearly laughed. “I forgot,” said he, “that you could not be aware, that these pink shells are the most precious coin of the land; compared with which, those bits of gold with which you have recently parted, are nothing—your whole fortune is now in that little packet. The fact is,” continued the unknown, making an effort to communicate, “although we possess in this country more of the precious metals than all the rest of the world together, the quantity is nevertheless utterly disproportioned to the magnitude of our wealth, and our wants. We have been, therefore, under the necessity of resorting to other means of representing the first, and supplying the second; and taking advantage of our insular situation, we have introduced these small pink shells, which abound all round the coast. Being much more convenient to carry, they are in

general circulation, and no genteel person has ever anything else in his pocket."

"Wonderful! But surely, then, it is no very difficult thing, in this country, to accumulate a fortune, since all that is necessary to give you every luxury of life, is a stroll one morning of your existence along the beach."

"By no means, my friend! you are really too rapid! The fact is, that no one has the power of originally circulating these shells, but our Government; and if any one, by any chance, choose to violate this arrangement, we make up for depriving him of his solitary walks on the shore, by instant submersion in the sea."

"Then the whole circulation of the country is at the mercy of your Government?" remarked Popanilla; summoning to his recollection the contents of one of those shipwrecked *brochures* which had exercised so strange an influence on his destiny, "suppose they do not choose to issue?"

"That is always guarded against. The mere quarterly payments of interest upon our national debt will secure an ample supply."

"Debt! I thought you were the richest nation in the world?"

"'Tis true; nevertheless, if there were a golden pyramid, with a base as big as the whole earth, and an apex touching the heavens, it would not supply us with sufficient metal to satisfy our creditors."

"But, my dear sir," exclaimed the perplexed Popanilla, "if this really be true, how, then, can you be said to be the richest nation in the world?"

"It is very simple. The annual interest upon our debt exceeds the whole wealth of the rest of the world; therefore, we must be the richest nation in the world."

"'Tis very true," said Popanilla; "I see I have yet much to learn. But with regard to these pink shells, how can you possibly create for them a certain standard of value? It is merely agreement among yourselves that fixes any value to them."

"By no means! you are so rapid! Each shell is immediately convertible into gold; of which metal, let me again remind you, we possess more than any other nation; but which, indeed, we only keep as a sort of dress coin, chiefly to indulge the prejudices of foreigners."

"But," said the perpetual Popanilla, "suppose every man who held a shell on the same day were to——"

“My good friend! I really am the last person in the world to give explanations. In Vraibleusia, we have so much to do, that we have no time to think—a habit which only becomes nations who are not employed. You are now fast approaching the Great Shell Question; a question which, I confess, affects the interests of every man in this island more than any other; but of which, I must candidly own, every man in this island is more ignorant than of any other. No one, however, can deny that the system works well; and if any thing at any time go wrong, why really Mr. Secretary Periwinkle is a wonderful man, and our most eminent conchologist,—he, no doubt, will set it right; and if, by any chance, things are past even his management, why then, I suppose, to use our national motto—*something will turn up*.”

Here they arrived at the hotel. Having made every arrangement for the comfort and convenience of the Fantaisian stranger, Popanilla's conductor took his leave; previously informing him, that his name was Skindeep; that he was a member of one of the largest families in the island; that, had he not been engaged to attend a lecture, he would have stayed and dined with him; but that he would certainly call upon him on the morrow.

Compared with his hotel, the palace of his banker was a dungeon; even the sunset voluptuousness of Fantaisie was now remembered without regret in the blaze of artificial light, and in the artificial gratification of desires which art had alone created. After a magnificent repast, his host politely inquired of Popanilla whether he would like to go to the Opera, the Comedy, or a Concert; but the Fantaisian philosopher was not yet quite corrupted; and still inspired with a desire to acquire useful knowledge, he begged his landlord to procure him immediately a pamphlet on the Shell Question.

While his host was engaged in procuring this luxury, a man entered the room and told Popanilla that he had walked that day two thousand five hundred paces, and that the tax due to the excise upon this promenade was fifty crowns. The Captain stared, and remarked to the excise-officer, that he thought a man's paces were a very strange article to tax: the excise-officer, with great civility, answered, that no doubt at first sight it might appear rather strange, but that it was the only article left untaxed in Vraibleusia; that there was a slight deficiency in the last quarter's revenue, and that therefore the Government had no alternative; that it was a tax which

did not press heavily upon the individual, because the Vraibleusians were of a very sedentary habit; that besides, it was an opinion every day more received among the best judges, that the more a man was taxed, the richer he ultimately would prove; and he concluded by saying, that Popanilla need not make himself uneasy about these demands; because, if he were ruined to-morrow, being a foreigner, he was entitled by the law of the land to five thousand a-year; whereas, he, the exciseman, being a native-born Vraibleusian, had no claims whatever upon the Government; therefore he hoped his honour would give him something to drink.

His host now entered with the "Novum Organon" of the great Periwinkle.—While Popanilla devoured the lively pages of this treatise, he discovered that the system which had been so subtly introduced by the Government, and which had so surprised him in the morning, had soon been adopted in private life; and although it was drowning matter to pick up pink shells, still there was nothing to prevent the whole commerce of the country from being carried on by means of a system equally conchological. He found that the social action in every part of the island was regulated and assisted by this process. Oyster-shells were first introduced; muscle-shells speedily followed; and, as commerce became more complicate, they had even been obliged to have recourse to snail-shells. Popanilla retired to rest with admiration of the people who thus converted to the most useful purposes, things apparently so useless. There was no saying now what might not be done, even with a nut-shell. It was evident that the nation, who contrived to be the richest people in the world, while they were over head and ears in debt, must be fast approaching to a state of perfection. Finally, sinking to sleep in a bed of eiderdown, Popanilla was confirmed in his prejudices against a state of Nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

SKINDEEP called upon Popanilla on the following morning in a very elegant equipage, and, with great politeness, proposed to attend him in a drive about the city.

The island of Vraibleusia is one hundred and fifty miles in circumference, two-thirds of which are covered by the city of Hub-

babub. It contains no other city, town, or village. The rest of the island consists of rivers, canals, and railroads. Popanilla was surprised when he was informed that Hubbabub did not contain more than five millions of inhabitants; but his surprise was decreased when their journey occasionally lay through tracks of streets, consisting often of capacious mansions which were entirely tenantless. On seeking an explanation of this seeming desolation, he was told that the Hubbabubians were possessed by a frenzy of always moving westward; and that consequently great quarters of the city are perpetually deserted. Even as Skindeep was speaking, their passage was stopped by a large caravan of carriages and waggon heavily laden with human creatures, and their children and chattels. On Skindeep inquiring the cause of this great movement, he was informed by one on horseback, who seemed to be the leader of the horde, that they were the late dwellers in sundry squares and streets, situated far to the east; that their houses having been ridiculed by an itinerant ballad-singer, the female part of the tribe had insisted upon immediately quitting their unfashionable fatherland; and that now, after three days' journey, they had succeeded in reaching the late settlement of a horde, who had migrated to the extreme west.

Quitting regions so subject to revolutions and vicissitudes, the travellers once more emerged into quarters of a less transitory reputation; and in the magnificent parks, the broad streets, the ample squares, the palaces, the triumphal arches, and the theatres of occidental Hubbabub, Popanilla lost those sad and mournful feelings which are ever engendered by contemplating the gloomy relics of departed greatness. It was impossible to admire too much the architecture of this part of the city. The elevations were indeed imposing. In general, the massy Egyptian appropriately graced the attic-stories; while the finer and more elaborate architecture of Corinth was placed on a level with the eye, so that its beauties might be more easily discovered. Spacious colonnades were flanked by porticos, surmounted by domes; nor was the number of columns at all limited, for you occasionally met with porticos of two tiers, the lower one of which consisted of three, the higher one of thirty columns. Pedestals of the purest Ionic Gothic were ingeniously intermixed with Palladian pedestals; and the surging spire exquisitely harmonised with the horizontal architecture of the ancients. But perhaps, after all,

the most charming effect was produced by the pyramids, surmounted by weathercocks.

Popanilla was particularly pleased by some chimneys of Caryatides, and did not for a moment hesitate in assenting to the assertion of Skindeep, that the Vraibleusians were the most architectural nation in the world. True it was, they had begun late; their attention as a people having been, for a considerable time, attracted to much more important affairs; but they had compensated for their tardy attention by their speedy excellence.*

Before they returned home, Skindeep led Popanilla to the top of a tower, from whence they had a complete view of the whole island. Skindeep particularly directed the Captain's attention to one spot, where flourished, as he said, the only corn-fields in the country, which supplied the whole nation, and were the property of one individual. So unrivalled was his agricultural science, that the vulgar only accounted for his admirable produce by a miraculous fecundity! The proprietor of these hundred golden acres was a rather mysterious sort of personage. He was an aboriginal inhabitant, and though the only one of the aborigines in existence, had lived many centuries; and to the consternation of some of the Vraibleusians, and the exultation of others, exhibited no signs of decay. This awful being was without a name. When spoken of by his admirers, he was generally described by such panegyrical periphrases as "soul of the country,"—"foundation of the state,"—"the only real, and true, and substantial being,"—while on the other hand, those who presumed to differ from those sentiments were in the habit of styling him "the dead weight,"—"the vampire,"—"the night-mare,"—and other titles equally complimentary. They also maintained that, instead of being either real or substantial, he was, in fact, the most flimsy and fictitious personage in the whole island; and then, lashing themselves up into metaphor, they would call him a meteor, or a vapour, or a great windy bubble, that would some day burst.

The Aboriginal insisted that it was the common law of the land that the Islanders should purchase their corn only of him. They grumbled, but he growled; he swore that it was the constitution of the country; that there was an uninterrupted line of precedents

* See a work which will be shortly published, entitled, "The difference detected between *Architecture* and *Parchitecture*, by Sansovino the Second."

to confirm the claim; and that if they did not approve of the arrangement, they and their fathers should not have elected to have settled, or presumed to have been spawned, upon his island. Then, as if he were not desirous of resting his claim on its mere legal merits, he would remind them of the superiority of his grain, and the impossibility of a scarcity, in the event of which calamity an insular people could always find a plentiful though temporary resource in sea-weed. He then clearly proved to them, that if ever they had the imprudence to change any of their old laws, they would necessarily never have more than one meal a day as long as they lived. Finally, he recalled to their recollection that he had made the island what it was, that he was their mainstay, and that his counsel and exertions had rendered them the wonder of the world. Thus, between force, and fear, and flattery, the Vraibleusians paid for their corn nearly its weight in gold; but what did that signify to a nation with so many pink shells!

CHAPTER IX.

THE third day, after his drive with his friend Skindeep, Popanilla was waited upon by the most eminent bookseller in Hubbabub, who begged to have the honour of introducing to the public a Narrative of Captain Popanilla's Voyage. This gentleman assured Popanilla that the Vraibleusian public was nervously alive to anything connected with discovery; that so ardent was their attachment to science and natural philosophy, that voyages and travels were sure to be read with great eagerness, particularly if they had coloured plates. Popanilla was charmed with the proposition, but blushing informed the mercantile Mæcenas that he did not know how to write. The publisher told him that this circumstance was not of the slightest importance; that he had never for a moment supposed that so sublime a savage could possess such a vulgar accomplishment; and that it was by no means difficult for a man to publish his travels without writing a line of them.

Popanilla having consented to become an author upon these terms, the publisher asked him to dine with him, and introduced him to a very intelligent individual. This very intelligent individual listened very attentively to all Popanilla's adventures. The

Captain concealed nothing. He began with the eternal lock of hair, and showed how wonderfully this world was constituted, that even the loss of a thing was not useless; from which it was clear that Utility was Providence. After drinking some capital wine, the intelligent individual told Popanilla that he was wrong in supposing Fantaisie to be an island; that, on the contrary, it was a great continent—that this was proved by the probable action of the tides in the part of the island which had not yet been visited—that the consequence of these tides would be that, in the course of a season or two, Fantaisie would become a great receptacle for icebergs, and be turned into the North Pole—that, therefore, the seasons throughout the world would be changed—that this year, in Vraibleusia, the usual winter would be omitted, and that when the present summer was finished, the dog-days would again commence. Popanilla took his leave, highly delighted with this intelligent individual, and with the bookseller's wine.

Owing to the competition which existed between the publishers, the printers, and the engravers of the city of Hubbabub, and the great exertions of the intelligent individual, the Narrative of Captain Popanilla's Voyage was brought out in less than a week, and was immediately in everybody's hand. The work contained a detailed account of everything which took place during the whole of the three days, and formed a quarto volume. The plates were numerous and highly interesting. There was a line-engraving of Alligator Mountain, and a mezzotint of Seaweed Island; a view of the canoe N.E.; a view of the canoe N.W.; a view of the canoe S.E.; a view of the canoe S.W. There were highly-finished coloured drawings of the dried fish and the bread-fruit, and an exquisitely tinted representation of the latter in a mouldy state. But the *chef-d'œuvre* was the portrait of the Author himself. He was represented trampling on the body of a boa constrictor of the first quality, in the skin of which he was dressed—at his back were his bow and arrows—his right hand rested on an uprooted pine-tree—he stood in a desert between two volcanos—at his feet was a lake of the greatest magnitude—the distance lowered with an approaching tornado; but a lucky flash of lightning revealed the range of the Andes and both oceans. Altogether he looked the most dandified of savages, and the most savage of dandies. It was a sublime lithograph, and produced scarcely less important effects upon Popanilla's fortune than that lucky "lock

of hair;" for no sooner was the portrait published, than Popanilla received a ticket for the reception of a lady of quality. On showing it to Skindeep, he was told that the honour was immense, and therefore he must go by all means. Skindeep regretted that he could not accompany him, but he was engaged to a lecture on shoemaking; and a lecture was a thing which he made it a point never to miss; because, as he very properly observed, "By lectures you may become extremely well-informed without any of the inconveniences of study. No fixity of attention, no continuity of meditation, no habits of reflection, no aptitude of combination, are the least requisite; all which things only give you a nervous headache—and yet you gain all the results of all these processes. True it is, that that which is so easily acquired is not always so easily remembered; but what of that? Suppose you forget any subject—why then you go to another lecture." "Very true!" said Popanilla.

Popanilla failed not to remember his invitation from Lady Spirituelle; and, at the proper hour, his announcement produced a sensation throughout her crowded saloons. Spirituelle was a most enchanting lady; she asked Popanilla how tall he really was, and whether the women in Fantaisie were as handsome as the men. Then she said that the Vraibleusians were the most intellectual and the most scientific nation in the world, and that the society at her house was the most intellectual and the most scientific in Vraibleusia. She told him also that she had hoped by this season the world would have been completely regulated by mind; but that the subversion of matter was a more substantial business than she and the Committee of Management had imagined: she had no doubt, however, that in a very short time mind must carry the day; because matter was mortal, and mind eternal; therefore mind had the best chance. Finally she also told him that the passions were the occasion of all the misery which had ever existed; and that it was impossible for mankind ever to be happy or great, until, like herself and her friends, they were "all soul."

Popanilla was quite charmed with his company. What a difference between the calm, smiling, easy, uninteresting, stupid, sunset countenances of Fantaisie, and those around him. All looked so interested, and so intelligent; their eyes were so anxious, their gestures so animated, their manners so earnest. They must be very clever! He drew nearer. If before he were charmed, now

he was enchanted: what an universal acquisition of useful knowledge! Three or four dukes were earnestly imbibing a new theory of gas, from a brilliant little gentleman in black, who looked like a Will-o'-the-wisp. The Prime Minister was very anxious about pin-making; a Bishop equally interested in a dissertation on the escapements of watches; a Field-marshal not less intent on a new specific from the concentrated essence of hellebore. But what most delighted Popanilla was hearing a lecture from the most eminent lawyer and statesman in Vraibleusia, on his first and favourite study of hydrostatics. His associations quite overcame him: all Fantaisie rushed upon his memory, and he was obliged to retire to a less frequented part of the room to relieve his too excited feelings.

He was in a few minutes addressed by the identical little gentleman who had recently been speculating with the three Dukes.

The little gentleman told him that he had heard, with great pleasure, that in Fantaisie they had no historians, poets, or novelists. He proved to Popanilla that no such thing as experience existed—that as the world was now to be regulated on quite different principles from those by which it had hitherto been conducted, similar events to those which had occurred could never again take place; and therefore it was absolutely useless to know anything about the past. With regard to literary fiction, he explained that, as it was absolutely necessary, from his nature, that man should experience a certain quantity of excitement, the false interest which these productions created prevented their readers from obtaining this excitement by methods which, by the discovery of the useful, might greatly benefit society.

“You are of opinion, then,” exclaimed the delighted Popanilla, “that nothing is good which is not useful.”

“Is it possible that an individual exists in this world, who doubts this great first principle?” said the little man, with great animation.

“Ah! my dear friend!” said Popanilla, “if you only knew what an avowal of this great first principle has cost me—what I have suffered—what I have lost!”

“What have you lost?” asked the little gentleman.

“In the first place, a lock of hair—”

“Poh! nonsense!”

“Ah! you may say Poh! but it was a very particular lock of hair.”

“My friend, that word is odious. Nothing is *particular*, everything is *general*. Rules are general—feelings are general—and property should be general; and, sir, I tell you what, in a very short time it must be so. Why should Lady Spirituelle, for instance, receive me at her house, rather than I receive her at mine?”

“Why don’t you, then?” asked the simple Popanilla.

“Because I have not got one, sir!” roared the little gentleman.

He would certainly have broke away, had not Popanilla begged him to answer one question. The Captain, reiterating in the most solemn manner his firm belief in the dogma that nothing was good which was not useful, and again detailing the persecutions which this conviction had brought upon him, was delighted that an opportunity was now afforded to gain, from the lips of a distinguished philosopher, a definition of what *utility* really was. The distinguished philosopher could not refuse so trifling a favour.

“Utility,” said he “is——”

At this critical moment there was an universal buzz throughout the rooms, and everybody looked so interested that the philosopher quite forgot to finish his answer. On inquiring the cause of this great sensation, Popanilla was informed that a rumour was about that a new element had been discovered that afternoon. The party speedily broke up—the principal philosophers immediately rushing to their clubs to ascertain the truth of this report. Popanilla was unfashionable enough to make his acknowledgments to his hostess before he left her house. As he gazed upon her ladyship’s brilliant eyes and radiant complexion, he felt convinced of the truth of her theory of the passions; he could not refrain from pressing her hand in a manner which violated etiquette, and which a nativity in the Indian Ocean could alone excuse; the pressure was graciously returned. As Popanilla descended the staircase, he discovered a little note of pink satin paper entangled in his ruffle. He opened it with curiosity. It was “all soul.” He did not return to his hotel quite so soon as he expected.

CHAPTER X.

POPANILLA breakfasted rather late the next morning, and on looking over the evening papers, which were just published, his eyes lighted on the following paragraph:—

“Arrived yesterday at the Hotel Diplomatique, His Excellency Prince Popanilla, Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary from the newly-recognised State of Fantaisie.”

Before his Excellency could either recover from his astonishment, or make any inquiries which might throw any illustration upon its cause, a loud shout in the street made him naturally look out of the window. He observed three or four magnificent equipages drawing up at the door of the hotel, and followed by a large crowd. Each carriage was drawn by four horses, and attended by footmen so radiant with gold and scarlet, that had Popanilla been the late ingenious Mr. Keates, he would have mistaken them for the natural children of Phœbus and Aurora. The Ambassador forgot the irregularity of the paragraph, in the splendour of the liveries. He felt triumphantly conscious that the most beautiful rose in the world must look extremely pale by the side of scarlet cloth; and this new example of the superiority of Art over Nature reminding him of the inferiority of bread-fruit to grilled muffin, he resolved to return to breakfast.

But it was his fate to be reminded of the inutility of the best resolutions, for ere the cup of coffee had touched his parched lips, the door of his room flew open, and the Marquess of Moustache was announced.

His Lordship was a young gentleman with an expressive countenance, that is to say, his face was so covered with hair, and the back of his head cropped so bald, that you generally addressed him in the rear by mistake. He did not speak, but continued bowing for a considerable time, in that diplomatic manner which means so much. By the time he had finished bowing, his suite had gained the apartment; and his Private Secretary, one of those uncommonly able men who only want an opportunity, seized the present one of addressing Popanilla.

Bowing to the late Captain with studied respect, he informed him that the Marquess Moustache was the nobleman appointed by the Government of Vraibleusia to attend upon his Excellency during

the first few weeks of his mission ; with the view of affording him all information upon those objects which might naturally be expected to engage the interest or attract the attention of so distinguished a personage. The ‘ancien marin’ and present Ambassador had been so used to miracles, since the loss of that lock of hair, that he did not think it supernatural, having, during the last few days been in turn a Fantasian nobleman, a post-captain, a fish, a goddess, and above all, an author, he should now be transformed into a plenipotentiary. Drinking, therefore, his cup of coffee, he assumed an air as if he really were used to have a Marquess for an attendant, and said that he was at his Lordship’s service.

The Marquess bowed very low, and the Private Secretary remarked, that the first thing to be done by his Excellency was to be presented to the Government. After that, he was to visit all the Manufactories in Vraibleusia, subscribe to all the Charities, and dine with all the Corporations, attend a *dejeuner à la fourchette* at a palace they were at present building under the sea, give a gold plate to be run for on the fashionable race-course, be present at morning prayers at the Government Chapel, hunt once or twice, give a dinner or two himself, make one pun, and go to the Play ; by which various means, he said, the good understanding between the two countries would be materially increased, and in a manner established.

As the Fantaisian Ambassador and his suite entered their carriages, the sky, if it had not been for the smoke, would certainly have been rent by the acclamations of the mob. “Popanilla for ever!” sounded from all quarters, except where the shout was varied by “Vraibleusia and Fantaisie against the world!” which perhaps was even the most popular sentiment of the two. The Ambassador was quite agitated, and asked the Marquess what he was to do. The Private Secretary told his Excellency to bow. Popanilla bowed with such grace, that in five minutes the horses were taken out of his carriage, and that carriage dragged in triumph by the enthusiastic populace. He continued bowing, and their enthusiasm continued increasing. In the meantime, his Excellency’s portrait was sketched by an artist who hung upon his wheel, and in less than half an hour a lithographic likeness of the popular idol was worshipped in every print-shop in Hubbabub.

As they drew nearer the Hall of Audience, the crowd kept increasing, till at length the whole city seemed poured forth to meet

him. Although now feeling conscious that he was the greatest man in the Island, and therefore only thinking of himself, Popanilla's attention was nevertheless at this moment attracted by a very singular figure. He was apparently a man: in stature a Patagonian, and robust as a well-fed Ogre. His countenance was jolly, but consequential; and his costume a curious mixture of a hunting-dress and a court suit. He was on foot, and in spite of the crowd, with the aid of a good whip, and his left fist, made his way with great ease. On inquiring who this extraordinary personage might be, Popanilla was informed that it was THE ABORIGINAL INHABITANT. As the giant passed the Ambassador's carriages, the whole suite, even Lord Moustache, rose and bent low; and the Secretary told Popanilla that there was no person in the island for whom the Government of Vraibleusia entertained so profound a respect.

The crowd was now so immense, that even the progress of the Aboriginal Inhabitant was for a moment impeded. The great man got surrounded by a large body of little mechanics. The contrast between the pale perspiring visages and lean forms of these emaciated and half-generated creatures, and the jolly form, and ruddy countenance, gigantic limbs, and ample frame of the aboriginal, was most striking; nor could any one view the group for an instant, without feeling convinced that the latter was really a superior existence. The mechanics, who were worn by labour, not reduced by famine, far from being miserable, were very impudent. They began rating the mighty one for the dearness of his corn. He received their attacks with great mildness. He reminded them that the regulation by which they procured their bread, was the aboriginal law of the island, under which they had all so greatly flourished. He explained to them that it was owing to this protecting principle, that he and his ancestors, having nothing to do but to hunt and shoot, had so preserved their health that, unlike the rest of the human race, they had not degenerated from the original form and nature of man. He showed that it was owing to the vigour of mind and body, consequent upon this fine health, that Vraibleusia had become the wonder of the world, and that they themselves were so actively employed; and he inferred that they surely could not grudge him the income which he derived, since that income was, in fact, the foundation of their own profits. He then satisfactorily demonstrated to them, that if by

any circumstances he were to cease to exist, the whole island would immediately sink under the sea. Having thus condescended to hold a little parley with his fellow-subjects, though not fellow-creatures, he gave them all a good sound flogging, and departed, amidst the loud and enthusiastic cheering of those whom he had so briskly lashed.

By this time, Popanilla had arrived at the Hall of Audience.

“It was a vast and venerable pile.”

His Excellency and suite quitted their carriages, amidst the renewed acclamations of the mob. Proceeding through a number of courts and quadrangles, crowded with guards and officials, they stopped before a bronze gate of great height. Over it was written, in vast characters of living flame, this inscription:—

TO

THE WISEST AND THE BEST,

THE RICHEST AND THE MIGHTIEST,

THE GLORY AND THE ADMIRATION,

THE DEFENCE AND THE CONSTERNATION.

On reading this mysterious inscription, his Excellency experienced a sudden and awful shudder. Lord Moustache, however, who was more used to mysteries, taking up a silver trumpet, which was fixed to the portal by a crimson cord, gave a loud blast. The gates flew open with the sound of a whirlwind, and Popanilla found himself in what at first appeared an illimitable hall. It was crowded, but perfect order was preserved. The Ambassador was conducted with great pomp to the upper end of the apartment, where, after an hour's walk, his Excellency arrived. At the extremity of the hall was a colossal and metallic Statue of extraordinary appearance. It represented an armed monarch. The head and bust were of gold, and the curling hair was crowned with an imperial diadem: the body and arms were of silver, worked in the semblance of a complete suit of enamelled armour of the feudal ages; and the thighs and legs were of iron, which the artist had clothed in the bandaged hose of the old Saxons. The figure bore the appearance of great antiquity, but had evidently been often repaired and renovated since its first formation. The workmanship was clearly of different eras, and the reparations, either from ignorance or intention, had often been effected with little

deference to the original design. Part of the shoulders had been supplied by the other, though less precious, metal, and the Roman and Imperial ornaments had unaccountably been succeeded by the less classic, though more picturesque, decorations of Gothic armour. On the other hand, a great portion of the chivalric and precious material of the body had been removed, and replaced by a style and substance resembling those of the lower limbs. In its right hand, the Statue brandished a naked sword; and with its left, leant upon a huge, though extremely rich and elaborately carved, crosier. It trampled upon a shivered lance and a broken chain.

“Your Excellency perceives,” said the Secretary, pointing to the Statue, “that ours is a mixed Government.”

Popanilla was informed that this extraordinary Statue enjoyed all the faculties of an intellectual being, with the additional advantage of some faculties which intellectual beings do not enjoy. It possessed not only the faculty of speech, but of speaking truth—not only the power of judgment, but of judging rightly—not only the habit of listening, but of listening attentively. Its antiquity was so remote, that the most profound and acute antiquarians had failed in tracing back its origin. The Aboriginal Inhabitant, however, asserted that it was the work of one of his ancestors; and as his assertion was confirmed by all traditions, the allegation was received. Whatever might have been its origin, certain it was, that it was now immortal—for it could never die—and to whomsoever it might have been originally indebted for its power, not less sure was it, that it was now omnipotent, for it could do all things. Thus alleged and thus believed the Vraibleusians—marvellous and sublime people! who with all the impotence of mortality, have created a Government which is both immortal and omnipotent!

Generally speaking, the Statue was held in great reverence, and viewed with great admiration by the whole Vraibleusian people. There were a very few persons, indeed, who asserted that the creation of such a Statue was by no means so mighty a business as it had been the fashion to suppose: and that it was more than probable, that with the advantages afforded by the scientific discoveries of modern times, they would succeed in making a more useful one. This, indeed, they offered to accomplish, provided the present Statue were preliminarily destroyed; but as they were well assured that this offer would never be accepted, it was gene-

rally treated, by those who refused it, as a braggadocio. There were many also, who, though they in general greatly admired and respected the present Statue, affected to believe that, though the execution was very wonderful, and the interior machinery indeed far beyond the powers of the present age, nevertheless the design was in many parts somewhat rude, and the figure altogether far from being well-proportioned. Some thought the head too big—some too small,—some that the body was disproportionately little—others, on the contrary, that it was so much too large, that it had the appearance of being dropsical—others maintained that the legs were too weak for the support of the whole, and that they should be rendered more important and prominent members of the figure; while, on the contrary, there were yet others who cried out, that really these members were already so extravagantly huge, so coarse, and so ungenteel, that they quite marred the general effect of a very beautiful piece of sculpture.

The same differences existed about the comparative excellence of the three metals, and the portions of the body which they respectively formed. Some admired the gold, and maintained, that if it were not for the head, the Statue would be utterly useless: others preferred the silver, and would assert that the body, which contained all the machinery, must clearly be the most precious portion; while a third party triumphantly argued, that the iron legs which supported both body and head, must surely be the most valuable part, since without them the Statue must fall. The first party advised, that in all future reparations, gold only should be introduced; and the other parties, of course, recommended with equal zeal their own favourite metals. It is observable, however, that if, under these circumstances, the iron race chanced to fail in carrying their point, they invariably voted for gold in preference to silver. But the most contradictory opinions, perhaps, were those which were occasioned by the instruments with which the Statue was armed and supported. Some affected to be so frightened by the mere sight of the brandished sword, although it never moved, that they pretended it was dangerous to live even under the same sky with it; while others, treating very lightly the terrors of this warlike instrument, would observe, that much more was really to be apprehended from the remarkable strength and thickness of the calm and peace-inspiring crosier; and that as long as the Government was supported by this huge pastoral staff

nothing could prevail against it; that it could dare all things, and even stand without the help of its legs. All these various opinions at least proved, that although the present might not be the most miraculous Statue that could possibly be created, it was nevertheless quite impossible ever to form one which would please all parties.

The care of this wonderful Statue was intrusted to twelve "Managers," whose duty it was to wind-up and regulate its complicated machinery, and who answered for its good management by their heads. It was their business to consult the oracle upon all occasions, and by its decisions to administer and regulate all the affairs of the State. They alone were permitted to hear its voice; for the Statue never spoke in public save on very rare occasions, and its sentences were then really so extremely commonplace, that had it not been for the deep wisdom of its general conduct, the Vraibleusians would have been almost tempted to believe that they really might exist without the services of the capital member. The twelve Managers surrounded the Statue at a respectful distance; their posts were the most distinguished in the State; and indeed the duties attached to them were so numerous, so difficult, and so responsible, that it required no ordinary abilities to fulfil, and demanded no ordinary courage to aspire to them.

The Fantaisian Ambassador having been presented, took his place on the right hand of the Statue, next to the Aboriginal Inhabitant, and public business then commenced.

There came forward a messenger, who, knocking his nose three times with great reverence on the floor, a knock for each metal of the figure, thus spoke:—

"O thou wisest and best! thou richest and mightiest! thou glory and admiration! thou defence and consternation!—lo! the King of the North is cutting all his subjects' heads off!"

This announcement produced a great sensation. The Marquess Moustache took snuff; the Private Secretary said he had long suspected that this would be the case; and the Aboriginal Inhabitant remarked to Popanilla, that the corn in the North was of an exceedingly coarse grain. While they were making these observations, the twelve Managers had assembled in deep consultation around the Statue, and in a very few minutes the Oracle was prepared. The answer was very simple, but the exordium was very

sublime. It professed that the Vraibleusian nation was the saviour and champion of the world—that it was the first principle of its policy to maintain the cause of any people struggling for their rights as men; and it avowed itself to be the grand patron of civil and religious liberty in all quarters of the globe. Forty-seven battalions of infantry, and eighteen regiments of cavalry, twenty-four sail of the line, seventy transports, and fifteen bomb-ketches, were then ordered to leave Vraibleusia for the North in less than sixty minutes!

“What energy!” said Popanilla; “what decision! what rapidity of execution!”

“Ay!” said the Aboriginal, smacking his thigh, “let them say what they like about their proportions, and mixtures, and metals—abstract nonsense! No one can deny that our Government works well. But see! here comes another messenger!”

“O thou wisest and best! thou richest and mightiest! thou glory and admiration! thou defence and consternation!—lo! the people of the South have cut their king’s head off!”

“Well! I suppose that is exactly what you all want,” said the innocent Popanilla.

The Private Secretary looked mysterious, and said that he was not prepared to answer—that his department never having been connected with this species of business, he was unable at the moment to give his Excellency the requisite information. At the same time, he begged to state, that provided anything he said should not commit him, he had no objection to answer the question hypothetically. The Aboriginal Inhabitant said that he would have no hypotheses or Jacobins; that he did not approve of cutting off kings’ heads; and that the Vraibleusians were the most monarchical people in the world. So saying, he walked up, without any ceremony, to the chief Manager, and taking him by the button, conversed with him some time in a very earnest manner, which made the stocks fall two per cent.

The Statue ordered three divisions of the grand army, and a battering-train of the first grade, off to the South, without the loss of a second. A palace and establishment were immediately directed to be prepared for the family of the murdered monarch; and the commander-in-chief was instructed to make every exertion to bring home the body of his Majesty embalmed. Such an im-

mense issue of pink shells was occasioned by this last expedition that stocks not only recovered themselves, but rose considerably.

The excitement occasioned by this last announcement, evaporated at the sight of a third messenger. He informed the Statue, that the Emperor of the East was unfortunately unable to pay the interest upon his national debt; that his treasury was quite empty, and his resources utterly exhausted. He requested the assistance of the most wealthy, and the most generous of nations; and he offered them as security for their advances, his gold and silver mines; which, for the breadth of their veins, and the richness of their ores, he said, were unequalled. He added, that the only reason they were unworked, was the exquisite flavour of the water-melons in his empire; which was so delicious, that his subjects of all classes, passing their whole day in devouring them, could be induced neither by force nor persuasion to do anything else. The cause was so reasonable, and the security so satisfactory, that the Vraibleusian Government felt themselves authorized in shipping off immediately all the gold in the island. Pink shells abounded, and stocks were still higher.

"You have no mines in Vraibleusia, I believe?" said Popanilla to the Aboriginal.

"No! but we have taxes."

"Very true!" said Popanilla.

"I understand that a messenger has just arrived from the West," said the secretary to the Fantaisian Plenipotentiary. "He must bring interesting intelligence from such interesting countries. Next to ourselves, they are evidently the most happy, the most wealthy, the most enlightened, and the most powerful Governments in the world. Although founded only last week, they already rank in the very first class of nations. I will send you a little pamphlet to-morrow, which I have just published upon this subject, in which you will see that I have combated, I trust not unsuccessfully, the ridiculous opinions of those cautious statesmen who insinuate that the stability of these Governments is even yet questionable."

The messenger from the Republics of the West now prostrated himself before the Statue. He informed it, that two parties had, unfortunately, broken out in these countries, and threatened their speedy dissolution; that one party maintained, that all human

government originated in the *wants* of man; while the other party asserted, that it originated in the *desires* of man. That these factions had become so violent, and so universal, that public business was altogether stopped, trade quite extinct, and the instalments due to Vraibleusia not forthcoming. Finally, he entreated the wisest and the best of nations to send to these distracted lands some discreet and trusty personages, well instructed in the first principles of government; in order that they might draw up constitutions for the ignorant and irritated multitude.

The Private Secretary told Popanilla that this was no more than he had long expected: that all this would subside, and that he should publish a postscript to his pamphlet in a few days, which he begged to dedicate to him.

A whole corps diplomatique, and another shipful of abstract philosophers, principally Scotchmen, were immediately ordered off to the West; and shortly after, to render their first principles still more effective, and their administrative arrangements still more influential, some brigades of infantry, and a detachment of the guards, followed. Free constitutions are apt to be misunderstood until half of the nation are bayoneted, and the rest imprisoned.

As this mighty Vraibleusian nation had, within the last half hour, received intelligence from all quarters of the globe, and interfered in all possible affairs, civil and military, abstract, administrative, diplomatic, and financial, Popanilla supposed that the assembly would now break up. Some petty business, however, remained. War was declared against the King of Sneezeland, for presuming to buy pocket-handkerchiefs of another nation; and the Emperor of Pastilles was threatened with a bombardment for daring to sell his peppers to another people. There were also some dozen commercial treaties to be signed, or canvassed, or cancelled; and a report having got about that there was a rumour that some disturbance had broken out in some parts unknown, a flying expedition was despatched, with sealed orders, to circumnavigate the globe, and arrange affairs. By this time, Popanilla thoroughly understood the meaning of the mysterious inscription.

Just as the assembly was about to be dissolved, another messenger, who, in his agitation, even forgot the accustomed etiquette of salutation, rushed into the presence.

“O most mighty! Sir Bombastes Furioso, who commanded our last expedition, having sailed, in the hurry, with wrong orders.

has attacked our ancient ally by mistake, and utterly destroyed him!"

Here was a pretty business for the Best and Wisest! At first the Managers behaved in a manner the most undiplomatic, and quite lost their temper;—they raved, they stormed, they contradicted each other, they contradicted themselves, and swore that Sir Bombastes' head should answer for it. Then they subsided into sulkiness, and at length beginning to suspect that the fault might ultimately attach only to themselves, they got frightened, and held frequent consultations, with pale visages, and quivering lips. After some time they thought they could do nothing wiser than put a good face upon the affair—whatever might be the result, it was, at any rate, a victory—and a victory would please the vainest of nations: and so these blundering and blustering gentlemen, determined to adopt the Conqueror, whom they were at first weak enough to disclaim—then vile enough to bully—and finally forced to reward. The Statue accordingly whispered a most elaborate panegyric on Furioso, which was of course duly delivered. The Admiral, who was neither a coward nor a fool, was made ridiculous by being described as the greatest commander that ever existed—one whom Nature, in a gracious freak, had made to shame us little men;—a happy compound of the piety of Noah, the patriotism of Themistocles, the skill of Columbus, and the courage of Nelson—and his exploit styled the most glorious and unrivalled victory that was ever achieved, even by the Vraibleusians! Honours were decreed in profusion, a general illumination ordered for the next twenty nights, and an expedition immediately dispatched to attack the right man.

All this time the conquerors were in waiting in an ante-room, in great trepidation, and fully prepared to be cashiered or cut in quarters. They were rather surprised, when bowing to the ground, they were saluted by some half-dozen Lords-in-waiting, as the greatest heroes of the age, congratulated upon their famous achievements, and humbly requested to appear in the Presence.

The warriors accordingly walked up in procession to the Statue, who, opening its mighty mouth, vomited forth a flood of ribbons, stars, and crosses, which were divided among the valiant band. This oral discharge, the Vraibleusians called the "fountain of honour."

Scarcely had the mighty Furioso and his crew disappeared, than

a body of individuals arrived at the top of the hall, and placing themselves opposite the Managers, began rating them for their inefficient administration of the island, and expatiated on the inconsistency of their late conduct to the conquering Bombastes. The Managers defended themselves in a manner perfectly in character with their recent behaviour: but their opponents were not easily satisfied with their confused explanations and their explained confusions, and the speeches on both sides grew warmer. At length the opposition proceeded to expel the administration from their places by force, and an eager scuffle between the two parties now commenced. The general body of spectators continued only to observe, and did not participate in the fray. At first, this *mêlée* only excited amusement; but as it lengthened, some wisely observed that public business greatly suffered by these private squabbles; and some even ventured to imagine that the safety of the Statue might be implicated by their continuance. But this last fear was futile.

Popanilla asked the Private Secretary which party he thought would ultimately succeed. The Private Secretary said, that if the present Managers retained their places, he thought that they would not go out; but if, on the other hand, they were expelled by the present opposition, it was probable that the present opposition would become Managers. The Aboriginal thought both parties equally incompetent; and told Popanilla some long stories about a person who was chief Manager in his youth, about five hundred years ago, to whom he said he was indebted for all his political principles, which did not surprise Popanilla.

At this moment a noise was heard throughout the hall, which made his Excellency believe that something untoward had again happened, and that another conqueror by mistake had again arrived. A most wonderful being galloped up to the top of the apartment. It was half man and half horse. The secretary told Popanilla that this was the famous Centaur Chiron; that his Horseship, having wearied of his ardent locality in the constellations, had descended some years back to the Island of Vraibleusia; that he had commanded the armies of the nation in all the great wars, and had gained every battle in which he had ever been engaged. Chiron was no less skilful, he said, in civil, than in military affairs; but the Vraibleusians, being very jealous of allowing themselves to be governed by their warriors, the Centaur had lately

been out of employ. While the secretary was giving him this information, Popanilla perceived that the great Chiron was attacking the combatants on both sides. The tutor of Achilles, Hercules, and Æneas, of course, soon succeeded in kicking them all out, and constituted himself chief and sole Manager of the Statue. Some grumbled at this autocratic conduct "upon principle," but they were chiefly connections of the expelled. The great majority, wearied with public squabbles, occasioned by private ends, rejoiced to see the public interest entrusted to an individual who had a reputation to lose. Intelligence of the appointment of the Centaur was speedily diffused throughout the island, and produced great and general satisfaction. There were a few, indeed, impartial personages, who had no great taste for Centaurs in civil capacities; from an apprehension, that if he could not succeed in persuading them by his eloquence, his Grace might chance to use his heels.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the evening of his presentation day, his Excellency the Fantaisian Ambassador and suite honoured the national theatre with their presence. Such a house was never known! The pit was miraculously overflowed before the doors were opened, although the proprietor did not permit a single private entrance: the enthusiasm was universal, and only twelve persons were killed. The Private Secretary told Popanilla, with an air of great complacency, that the Vraibleusian theatres were the largest in the world. Popanilla had little doubt of the truth of this information, as a long time elapsed before he could even discover the stage. He observed that every person in the theatre carried a long black glass, which he kept perpetually fixed to his eye. To sit in a huge room hotter than a glass-house, in a posture emulating the most sanctified Faquir, with a throbbing head-ache, a breaking back, and twisted legs, with a heavy tube held over one eye, and the other covered with the unemployed hand, is, in Vraibleusia, called a public amusement.

The play was by the most famous dramatist that Vraibleusia ever produced; and certainly, when his Excellency witnessed the first scenes, it was easier to imagine that he was once more in his own sunset Isle of Fantaisie, than in the railroad state of

Vraibleusia: but, unfortunately, this evening the principal characters and scenes were omitted, to make room for a moving panorama, which lasted some hours, of the chief and most recent Vraibleusian victories. The audience fought their battles o'er again with great fervour. During the play, one of the inferior actors was supposed to have saluted a female chorus-singer with an ardour which was more than theatrical, and every lady in the house immediately fainted; because, as the eternal secretary told Popanilla, the Vraibleusians are the most modest and most moral nation in the world. The male part of the audience insisted, in very indignant terms, that the offending performer should immediately be dismissed. In a few minutes he appeared upon the stage to make a most humble apology, for an offence which he was not conscious of having committed; but the most moral and the most modest of nations was implacable, and the wretch was expelled. Having a large family dependent upon his exertions, the actor, according to a custom prevalent in Vraibleusia, went immediately and drowned himself in the nearest river. Then the ballet commenced.

It was soon discovered that the chief dancer, a most celebrated foreigner, who had been announced for this evening, was absent. The uproar was tremendous, and it was whispered that the house would be pulled down: because, as Popanilla was informed, the Vraibleusians are the most particular and the freest people in the world, and never will permit themselves to be treated with disrespect. The principal chandelier having been destroyed, the manager appeared, and regretted that Signor Zephyrino, being engaged to dine with a Grandee of the first class, was unable to fulfil his engagement. The house became frantic, and the terrified manager sent immediately for the Signor. The artist, after a proper time had elapsed, appeared with a napkin round his neck, and a silver fork in his hand, with which he stood some moments, until the uproar had subsided, picking his teeth. At length, when silence was obtained, he told them that he was surprised that the most polished and liberal nation in the world should behave themselves in such a brutal and narrow-minded manner. He threatened them, that he would throw up his engagement immediately, and announce to all foreign parts that they were a horde of barbarians; then abusing them for a few seconds in round terms, he retired amidst the cheerings of the whole house, to finish his wine.

When the performances were finished, the audience rose and joined in chorus. On Popanilla inquiring the name and nature of this effusion, he was told that it was the national air of the Isle of Fantaisie, sung in compliment to himself. His Excellency shrugged his shoulders, and bowed very low.

The next morning, attended by his suite, Popanilla visited the most considerable public offices and manufactories in Hubbabub. He was received in all places with the greatest distinction. He was invariably welcomed either by the chiefs of the department or the proprietors themselves, and a sumptuous collation was prepared for him in every place. His Excellency evinced the liveliest interest in every thing that was pointed out to him, and instantaneously perceived that the Vraibleusians exceeded the rest of the world in manufactures and public works, as much as they did in arms, morals, modesty, philosophy, and politics. The Private Secretary being absent upon his postscript, Popanilla received the most satisfactory information upon all subjects from the Marquess himself. Whenever he addressed any question to his Lordship, his noble attendant, with the greatest politeness, begged him to take some refreshment. Popanilla returned to his hotel with a great admiration of the manner in which refined philosophy in Vraibleusia was applied to the common purposes of life; and found that he had that morning acquired a general knowledge of the chief arts and sciences, eaten three hundred sandwiches, and tasted as many bottles of sherry.

CHAPTER XII.

THE most commercial nation in the world was now busily preparing to diffuse the blessings of civilisation and competition throughout the native country of their newly-acquired friend. The greatest exporters that ever existed had never been acquainted with such a subject for exportation as the Isle of Fantaisie. There, every thing was wanted. It was not a partial demand which was to be satisfied, nor a particular deficiency which was to be supplied; but a vast population was thoroughly to be furnished with every article which a vast population must require. From the manufacturer of steam-engines, to the manufacturer of stockings, all were all alike employed. There was no branch of trade in

Vraibleusia which did not equally rejoice at this new opening for commercial enterprise, and which was not equally interested in this new theatre for Vraibleusian industry, Vraibleusian invention, Vraibleusian activity, and above all, Vraibleusian competition.

Day and night, the whole island was employed in preparing for the great fleet, and in huzzaing Popanilla. When at home, every ten minutes he was obliged to appear in the balcony, and then with hand on heart, and hat in hand—ah! that bow! that perpetual motion of popularity! If a man love ease, let him be most unpopular. The Managers did the impossible to assist and advance the intercourse between the two nations. They behaved in a most liberal and enlightened manner, and a deputation of the most liberal and enlightened merchants consequently waited upon them with a vote of thanks. They issued so many pink shells, that the price of the public funds was doubled, and affairs arranged so skilfully, that money was universally declared to be worth nothing,—so that every one in the island, from the Premier down to the Mendicant whom the lecture-loving Skin-deep threatened with the bastinado, was enabled to participate, in some degree, in the approaching venture—if we should use so dubious a term in speaking of profits so very certain.

Compared with the Fantaisian connection, the whole commerce of the world appeared to the Vraibleusians a retail business. All other customers were neglected or discarded, and each individual seemed to concentrate his resources to supply the wants of a country where they dance by moonlight, live on fruit, and sleep on flowers. At length the first fleet of five hundred sail, laden with the most wonderful specimens of Vraibleusian mechanism, and the most innumerable bales of Vraibleusian manufactures; articles raw and refined, goods dry and damp, wholesale and retail; silks and woollen cloths; cottons, cutlery and camlets; flannels and ladies' albums; under-waistcoats, kid-gloves, engravings, coats, cloaks, and ottomans; lamps and looking-glasses; sofas, round-tables, equipages and scent-bottles; fans and tissue-flowers; porcelain, poetry, novels, newspapers, and cookery books; bear's-grease, blue pills, and bijouterie; arms, beards, poodles, pages, mustachios, court-guides and bon-bons; music, pictures, ladies' maids, scrap-books, buckles, boxing-gloves, guitars, and snuff-boxes; together with a company of Opera-singers, a band of Comedians, a popular preacher, some quacks,

lecturers, artists, and literary gentlemen—principally sketch-book men—quitted, one day, with a favourable wind, and amid the exultation of the inhabitants, the port of Hubbabub!

When his Excellency, Prince Popanilla, heard of the contents of this stupendous cargo, notwithstanding his implicit confidence in the superior genius and useful knowledge of the Vraibleusians, he could not refrain from expressing a doubt, whether, in the present undeveloped state of his native land, any returns could be made proportionate to so curious and elaborate an importation; but whenever he ventured to intimate his opinion to any of the most commercial nation in the world, he was only listened to with an incredulous smile, which seemed to pity his inexperience; or told, with an air of profound self-complacency, that in Fantaisie “there must be great resources.”

In the meantime, public companies were formed for working the mines, colonizing the waste lands, and cutting the coral rocks of the Indian Isle, of all which associations Popanilla was chosen Director by acclamation. These, however, it must be confessed, were speculations of a somewhat doubtful nature; but the Branch Bank Society of the Isle of Fantaisie really held out the most flattering prospects.

When the fleet had sailed, they gave Popanilla a public dinner. It was attended by all the principal men in the island, and he made a speech, which was received in a rather different manner than was his sunset oration, by the monarch whom he now represented. Fantaisie, and its accomplished Envoy, were at the same time the highest and the universal fashion. The ladies sang *à la Syrene*; dressed their hair *à la Mermede*, and themselves *à la Fantastique*; which, by-the-bye, was not new: and the gentlemen wore boa-constrictor cravats, and waltzed *à la mer Indienne*—a title probably suggested by a remembrance of the dangers of the sea.

It was soon discovered, that without taking into consideration the average annual advantages which would necessarily spring from their new connection, the profits which must accrue upon the present expedition alone had already doubled the capital of the island. Everybody in Vraibleusia had either made a fortune, or laid the foundation of one. The penniless had become prosperous, and the principal merchants and manufacturers having realised large capitals, retired from business. But the

colossal fortunes were made by the gentlemen who had assisted the administration in raising the price of the public funds, and in managing the issues of the pink shells. The effect of this immense increase of the national wealth, and of this creation of new and powerful classes of society, was speedily felt. Great moves to the westward were perpetual, and a variety of sumptuous squares and streets were immediately run up in that chosen land. Butlers were at a premium; coach-makers never slept; card-engravers, having exhausted copper, had recourse to steel; and the demand for arms at the Heralds' College was so great, that even the mystical genius of Garter was exhausted, and hostile meetings were commenced between the junior members of some ancient families, to whom the same crest had been unwittingly apportioned; but the seconds interfering, they discovered themselves to be relations. All the eldest sons were immediately to get into Parliament, and all the younger ones as quickly into the Guards, and the simple Fantaisian Envoy, who had the peculiar felicity of taking everything *au pied du lettre*, made a calculation, that if these arrangements were duly effected, in a short time, the Vraibleusian representatives would exceed the Vraibleusian represented; and that there would be at least three officers in the Vraibleusian Guards to every private. Judging from the beards and mustachios which now abounded, this great result was near at hand. With the snub nose, which is the characteristic of the Millionaires, these appendages produce a pleasing effect.

When the excitement had a little subsided; when their mighty mansions were magnificently furnished; when their bright equipages were fairly launched, and the due complement of their liveried retainers perfected; when, in short, they had imitated the aristocracy in every point in which wealth could rival blood: then the new people discovered with dismay that one thing was yet wanting, which treasure could not purchase, and which the wit of others could not supply—Manner. In homely phrase, the Millionaires did not know how to behave themselves. Accustomed to the counting-house, the factory, or the exchange, they looked queer in saloons, and said "Sir!" when they addressed you; and seemed stiff, and hard, and hot. Then the solecisms they committed in more formal society, oh! they were outrageous; and a leading article in an eminent journal was actually written

upon the subject I dare not write the deeds they did; but it was whispered, that when they drank wine, they filled their glasses to the very brim. All this delighted the old class, who were as envious of their riches, as the new people were emulous of their style.

In any other country except Vraibleusia, persons so situated would have consoled themselves for their disagreeable position, by a consciousness that their posterity would not be annoyed by the same deficiencies: but the wonderful Vraibleusian people resembled no other, even in their failings. They determined to acquire in a day, that which had hitherto been deemed the gradual consequence of tedious education.

A "Society for the Diffusion of Fashionable Knowledge," was announced; the Millionaires looked triumphantly mysterious; the aristocrats quizzed. The object of the society is intimated by its title; and the method by which its institutors proposed to attain this object, was the periodical publication of pamphlets, under the superintendence of a competent committee. The first treatise appeared:—its subject was NONCHALANCE. It instructed its students ever to appear inattentive in the society of men, and heartless when they conversed with women. It taught them not to understand a man if he were witty; to misunderstand him if he were eloquent; to yawn or stare, if he chanced to elevate his voice, or presumed to ruffle the placidity of the social calm, by addressing his fellow-creatures with teeth unparted. Excellence was never to be recognised, but only disparaged with a look:—an opinion or a sentiment, and the *nonchalant* was lost for ever. For these, he was to substitute a smile like a damp sunbeam, a moderate curl of the upper lip, and the all-speaking and perpetual shrug of the shoulders. By a skilful management of these qualities, it was shown to be easy to ruin another's reputation, and ensure your own, without ever opening your mouth. To woman, this exquisite treatise said much in few words:—"Listlessness, listlessness, listlessness," was the edict by which the most beautiful works of nature were to be regulated, who are only truly charming when they make us feel, and feel themselves. "Listlessness, listlessness, listlessness;" for when you choose not to be listless, the contrast is so striking, that the triumph must be complete.

The treatise said much more, which I shall omit. It forgot, however, to remark, that this vaunted Nonchalance may be the

offspring of the most contemptible and the most odious of passions : and that while it may be exceedingly refined to appear uninterested when others are interested, to witness excellence without emotion, and to listen to genius without animation, the heart of the Insensible may as often be inflamed by Envy, as inspired by Fashion.

Dissertations “ On leaving cards,” “ On cutting intimate friends,” “ On cravats,” “ On dinner courses,” “ On poor relations,” “ On bores,” “ On lions,” were announced as speedily to appear. In the meantime, the Essay on Nonchalance produced the very best effects. A *ci-devant* stock-broker cut a Duke dead at his club, the day after its publication ; and his daughter yawned, while his Grace’s eldest son, the Marquess, made her an offer as she was singing “ *Di tanti palpiti*.” The aristocrats got a little frightened, and when an eminent hop-merchant and his lady had asked a dozen Countesses to dinner, and forgot to be at home to receive them, the old class left off quizzing.

The pamphlets, however, continued issuing forth, and the new people advanced at a rate which was awful. They actually began to originate some ideas of their own ; and there was a whisper among the leaders, of voting the aristocrats old-fashioned. The Diffusion Society now caused these exalted personages great anxiety and uneasiness. They argued, that Fashion was a relative quality ; that it was quite impossible, and not to be expected, that all people were to aspire to be fashionable ; that it was not in the nature of things, and that if it were, society could not exist ; that the more their imitators advanced, the more they should baffle their imitations ; that a first and fashionable class was a necessary consequence of the organisation of man ; and that a line of demarcation would for ever be drawn between them and the other Islanders. The warmth and eagerness with which they maintained and promulgated their opinions, might have tempted, however, an impartial person to suspect that they secretly entertained some doubts of their truth and soundness.

On the other hand, the other party maintained that Fashion was a positive quality ; that the moment a person obtained a certain degree of refinement, he, or she, became, in fact, and essentially, fashionable : that the views of the old class were unphilosophical and illiberal, and unworthy of an enlightened age ; that men are equal, and that everything is open to everybody ; and that when

we take into consideration the nature of man, the origin of society, and a few other things, and duly consider the constant inclination and progression towards perfection which mankind evince—there was no reason why, in the course of time, the whole nation should not go to Almack's on the same night.

At this moment of doubt and dispute, the Government of Vraibleusia, with that spirit of conciliation and liberality, and that perfect wisdom, for which it had been long celebrated, caring very little for the old class, whose interest it well knew was to support it, and being exceedingly desirous of engaging the affections of the new race, declared in their favour; and acting on that sublime scale of measures, for which this great nation has always been so famous, the Statue issued an edict, that a new literature should be invented, in order at once to complete the education of the Millionaires, and the triumph of the Romantic over the Classic School of Manners.

The most eminent writers were, as usual, in the pay of the Government, and BURLINGTON, A TALE OF FASHIONABLE LIFE, in three volumes post octavo, was sent forth. Two or three similar works, bearing titles equally euphonious and aristocratic, were published daily; and so exquisite was the style of these productions, so naturally artificial the construction of their plots, and so admirably inventive the conception of their characters, that many who had been repulsed by the somewhat abstract matter and arid style of the treatises, seduced by the interest of a story, and by the dazzling delicacies of a charming style, really now picked up a considerable quantity of very useful knowledge; so that when the delighted students had eaten some fifty or sixty imaginary dinners in my lord's dining-room, and whirled some fifty or sixty imaginary waltzes in my lady's dancing-room, there was scarcely a brute left among the whole Millionaires. But what produced the most beneficial effects on the new people, and excited the greatest indignation and despair among the old class, were some volumes which the Government, with shocking Machiavelism, bribed some needy scions of nobility to scribble, and which revealed certain secrets vainly believed to be quite sacred and inviolable.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHORTLY after the sailing of the great fleet, the Private Secretary engaged in a speculation, which was rather more successful than any one contained in his pamphlet on "The Present State of the Western Republics."

One morning, as he and Popanilla were walking on a quay, and deliberating on the clauses of the projected commercial treaty between Vraibleusia and Fantaisie, the Secretary suddenly stopped, as if he had seen his father's ghost, or lost the thread of his argument, and asked Popanilla, with an air of suppressed agitation, whether he observed anything in the distance. Popanilla, who, like all savages, was very long-sighted, applying to his eye the glass, which, in conformity to the custom of the country, he always wore round his neck, confessed that he saw nothing. The Secretary, who had never unfixed his glance, nor moved a step, since he asked the question, at length, by pointing with his finger, attracted Popanilla's attention to what his Excellency conceived to be a porpoise bobbing up and down in the waves. The Secretary, however, was not of the same opinion as the Ambassador. He was not very communicative, indeed, as to his own opinion upon this grave subject, but he talked of making farther observations when the tide went down; and was so listless, abstracted, and absent, during the rest of their conversation, that it soon ceased, and they speedily parted.

The next day, when Popanilla read the morning papers, a feat which he regularly performed—for spelling the newspaper was quite delicious to one who had so recently learned to read,—he found that they spoke of nothing but of the discovery of a new island, information of which had been received by the Government only the preceding night. The Fantaisian Ambassador turned quite pale, and for the first time in his life experienced the passion of jealousy—the green-eyed monster, so called from only being experienced by green-horns. Already the prominent State he represented seemed to retire to the back-ground. He did not doubt that the Vraibleusians were the most capricious, as well as the most commercial nation in the world. His reign was evidently over. The new island would send forth a Prince still more popular. His allowance of pink shells would be gradually

reduced, and finally withdrawn. His doubts, also, as to the success of the recent expedition to Fantaisie began to revive. His rising reminiscences of his native land, which, with the joint assistance of popularity and philosophy, he had hitherto succeeded in stifling, were indeed awkward. He could not conceive his mistress with a page and a poodle. He feared much that the cargo was not very well assorted. Popanilla determined to inquire after his canoe.

His courage, however, was greatly re-assured, when, on reading the second edition, he learned, that the new island was not of very considerable size, though most eligibly situate; and, moreover, that it was perfectly void of inhabitants. When the third edition was published, he found, to his surprise, that the Private Secretary was the discoverer of this opposition island. This puzzled the Plenipotentiary greatly. He read on;—he found that this acquisition, upon which all Vraibleusia was congratulated in such glowing terms by all its journals, actually produced nothing. His Excellency began to breathe;—another paragraph, and he found that the rival island was—a rock! He remembered the porpoise of yesterday. The island certainly could not be very large, even at low water. Popanilla once more felt like a Prince: he defied all the discoverers that could ever exist. He thought of the great resources of the great country he represented with proud satisfaction. He waited with easy confidence the return of the fleet which had carried out the most judicious assortment with which he had ever been acquainted, to the readiest market of which he had any knowledge. He had no doubt his mistress would look most charmingly in a barege. Popanilla determined to present his canoe to the National Museum.

Although his Excellency had existed in the highest state of astonishment during his whole mission to Vraibleusia, it must be confessed, now that he understood his companion's question of yesterday, he particularly stared. His wonder was not decreased in the evening, when the Government Gazette appeared. It contained an order for the immediate fortification of the new island by the most skilful engineers, without estimates. A strong garrison was instantly embarked. A Governor, and a Deputy-Governor, and Storekeepers, more plentiful than stores, were to accompany them. The Private Secretary went out as President of Council. A Bishop was promised; and a complete Court of

Judicature, Chancery, King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer, were to be off the next week. It is only due to the characters of courtiers, who are so often reproached with ingratitude to their patrons, to record, that the Private Secretary, in the most delicate manner, placed at the disposal of his former employer, the Marquess Moustache, the important office of Agent for the Indemnification Claims of the original Inhabitants of the Island. The post being a sinecure, the income being considerable, and local attendance being unnecessary, the noble Lord, in a manner equally delicate, appointed himself.

“Upon what system,” one day inquired that unwearied political student, the Fantaisian Ambassador, of his old friend Skindeep, “does your Government surround a small rock in the middle of the sea with fortifications, and cram it full of clerks, soldiers, lawyers, and priests?”

“Why, really, your Excellency, I am the last man in the world to answer questions, but, I believe, we call it THE COLONIAL SYSTEM!”

Before the President, and Governor, and Deputy-Governor, and Storekeepers had embarked, the Vraibleusian journals, who thought that the public had been satiated with congratulations on the Colonial System, detected that the present colony was a job. Their reasoning was so convincing, and their denunciations so impressive, that the Managers got frightened, and cut off one of the Deputy-Storekeepers. The President of Council now got more frightened than the Managers. He was one of those men who think that the world can be saved by writing a pamphlet. A pamphlet accordingly appeared upon the subject of the new colony. The writer showed, that the debateable land was the most valuable acquisition ever attained by a nation famous for their acquisitions; that there was a spring of water in the middle of the rock of a remarkable freshness, and which was never dry, except during the summer, and the earlier winter months; that all our outward-bound ships would experience infinite benefit from this fresh water; that the scurvy would therefore disappear from the service; and that all the naval victories which the Vraibleusians would gain in future wars, would consequently be occasioned by the present colony. No one could mistake the felicitous reasoning of the author of “The Present State of the Western Republics!”

About this time Popanilla fell ill. He lost his appetite and his

spirits, and his digestion was sadly disordered. His friends endeavoured to console him by telling him, that dyspepsia was the national disease of Vraibleusia; that its connection with civil and religious liberty was indissoluble; that every man, woman, and child, above fifteen, in the island, was a martyr to it; that it was occasioned by their rapid mode of dispatching their meals, which again was occasioned by the little time which the most active nation in the world could afford to bestow upon such a losing business as eating.

All this was no consolation to a man who had lost his appetite; and so Popanilla sent for a gentleman, who, he was told, was the most eminent physician in the island. The most eminent physician, when he arrived, would not listen to a single syllable that his patient wished to address to him. He told Popanilla, that his disorder was "decidedly liver;" that it was occasioned by his eating his meat before his bread, instead of after it; and drinking at the end of the first course, instead of the beginning of the second; that he had only to correct these ruinous habits, and that he would then regain his tone.

Popanilla observed the instructions of the eminent physician to the very letter. He invariably eat his bread before his meat, and watched the placing of the first dish of the second course upon the table ere he ventured to refresh himself with any liquid. At the end of a week he was infinitely worse.

He now called in a gentleman who was recommended to him as the most celebrated practitioner in all Vraibleusia. The most celebrated practitioner listened with great attention to every particular that his patient had to state; but never condescended to open his own mouth. Popanilla was delighted, and revenged himself for the irritability of the eminent physician. After two more visits, the most celebrated practitioner told Popanilla that his disorder was "unquestionably nervous;" that he had over-excited himself by talking too much; that in future he must count five between each word he uttered, never ask any questions, and avoid society—that is, never stay at any evening-party on any consideration later than twenty-two minutes past two, and never be induced by any persuasion to dine out more than once on the same day. The most celebrated practitioner added, that he had only to observe these regulations, and that he would speedily recover his energy.

Popanilla never asked a question for a whole week, and Skindeep never knew him more delightful. He not only counted five, but ten, between every word he uttered; and determining that his cure should not be delayed, whenever he had nobody to speak to, he continued counting. In a few days this solitary computation brought on a slow fever.

He now determined to have a consultation between the most eminent physician, and the most celebrated practitioner. It was delightful to witness the meeting of these great men. Not a shade of jealousy dimmed the sunshine of their countenances. After a consultation, they agreed that Popanilla's disorder was neither "liver, nor "nervous," but "mind;" that he had done too much; that he had overworked his brain; that he must take more exercise; that he must breathe more air; that he must have relaxation; that he must have change of scene.

"Where shall I go?" was the first question which Popanilla had sent forth for a fortnight, and it was addressed to Skindeep.

"Really, your Excellency, I am the last man in the world to answer questions; but the place which is generally frequented by us when we are suffering from your complaint, is Blunderland."

"Well, then, to Blunderland let us go!"

Shortly before Popanilla's illness, he had been elected a member of the Vraibleusian Horticultural Society, and one evening he had endeavoured to amuse himself by reading the following

CHAPTER ON FRUIT.

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT a taste for Fruit is inherent in man, is an opinion which is sanctioned by the conduct of man in all ages and in all countries. While some nations have considered it profanation, or pollution, to nourish themselves with flesh, or solace themselves with fish; while almost every member of the animal creation has in turn been considered either sacred or unclean—mankind, in all climes, and in all countries, the Hindoo and the Hebrew, the Egyptian and the Greek, the Roman and the Frank, have, in some degree, made good their boastful claim to reason, by universally

feeding upon those delightful productions of Nature which are nourished with the dews of heaven, and which live for ever in its breath.

And, indeed, when we consider how exceedingly refreshing at all times is the flavour of fruit; how very natural, and, in a manner, born in him, is man's inclination for it; how little it is calculated to pall upon his senses; and how conducive, when not eaten to excess, it is to his health, as well as to his pleasure; we must not be surprised that a conviction of its excellence should have been one of those few subjects on which men have never disagreed.

That some countries are more favoured in their fruit than others, is a fact so notorious that its notice is unnecessary; but we are not therefore to suppose that their appetite for it is more keen than the appetite of other nations for their fruit, who live in less genial climes. Indeed, if we were not led to believe that all nations are inspired by an equal love for this production, it might occasionally be suspected that some of those nations, who are least skilful as horticulturists, evince a greater passion for their inferior growths, than more fortunate people for their choicer produce. The effects of bad fruit, however, upon the constitution, and consequently upon the national character, are so injurious, that every liberal man must regret that any people, either from ignorance or obligation, should be forced to have recourse to anything so fatal; and must feel that it is the duty of every one, who professes to be a philanthropist, to propagate and encourage a taste for good fruit throughout all countries of the globe.

A vast number of centuries before Popanilla had the fortune to lose his mistress's lock of hair, and consequently to become an ambassador to Vraibleusia, the inhabitants of that island, then scarcely more civilised than their new allies of Fantaisie were at present, suffered very considerably from the trash which they devoured, from that innate taste for fruit already noticed. In fact, although there are antiquaries who pretend that the Vraibleusians possessed some of the species of wild plums and apples, even at that early period, the majority of inquirers are disposed to believe, that their desserts were solely confined to the wildest berries, horse-chestnuts, and acorns.

A tradition runs, that while they were committing these abomi-

nations, a ship, one of the first ships that had ever touched at the island, arrived at the present port of Hubbabub, then a spacious and shipless bay. The master of the vessel, on being brought before the King (for the story I am recording happened long before the construction of the miraculous Statue), presented, with his right hand, to his Majesty, a small pyramidal substance of a golden hue, which seemed to spring out of green and purple leaves. His Majesty did not exactly understand the intention of this ceremony; but of course, like a true legitimate, construed it into a symbol of homage. No sooner had the King brought the unknown substance near to his eyes, with the intention of scrutinizing its nature, than the fragrance was so delightful, that by mistake he applied it to his mouth. The King only took one mouthful, and then, with a cry of rapture, instantly handed the delicacy to his favourite, who, to the great mortification of the Secretary of State, finished it. The stranger, however, immediately supplied the surrounding courtiers from a basket which was slung on his left arm; and no sooner had they all tasted his gift than they fell upon their knees to worship him, vowing that the distributor of such delight must be more than man. If this avowal be considered very absurd and very extraordinary in this present age of philosophy, we must not forget to make due allowance for the palates of individuals, who, having been so long accustomed merely to horse-chestnuts and acorns, suddenly, for the first time in their lives, tasted—Pine-apple.

The stranger, with an air of great humility, disclaimed their proffered adoration, and told them, that far from being superior to common mortals, he was, on the contrary, one of the lowliest of the human race—in fact, he did not wish to conceal it—in spite of his vessel and his attendants, he was merely a market-gardener on a great scale. This beautiful fruit he had recently discovered in the East, to which quarter of the world he annually travelled in order to obtain a sufficient quantity to supply the great Western hemisphere, of which he himself was a native. Accident had driven him, with one of his ships, into the Island of Vraibleusia; and as the Islanders appeared to be pleased with his cargo, he said that he should have great pleasure in supplying them at present, and receiving their orders for the future.

The proposition was greeted with enthusiasm. The King im-

mediately entered into a contract with the market-gardener on his own terms. The sale, or cultivation, or even the eating of all other fruits, was declared high-treason; and pine-apple, for weighty reasons duly recited in the royal proclamation, announced as the established fruit of the realm. The cargo, under the superintendence of some of the most trusty of the crew, was unshipped for the immediate supply of the island; and the merchant and his customers parted, mutually delighted and mutually profited.

Time flew on. The civilisation of Vraibleusia was progressive, as civilisation always is; and the taste for pine-apples ever on the increase, as the taste for pine-apples ever should be. The supply was regular and excellent, the prices reasonable, and the tradesmen civil. They, of course, had not failed to advance in fair proportion with the national prosperity. Their numbers had much increased as well as their customers. Fresh agents arrived with every fresh cargo. They had long quitted the stalls, with which they had been contented on their first settlement in the island, and now were the dapper owners of neat depôts in all parts of the kingdom where depôts could find customers.

A few more centuries, and affairs began to change. All that I have related as matter of fact, and which certainly is not better authenticated than many other things that happened two or three thousand years ago—which, however, the most sceptical will not presume to maintain did not take place—was treated as the most idle and ridiculous fable, by the dealers in pine-apples themselves. They said that they knew nothing about a market-gardener; that they were, and had always been, the subjects of the greatest Prince in the world, compared with whom, all other crowned heads ranked merely as subjects did with their immediate sovereigns. This Prince, they said, lived in the most delicious region in the world, and the fruit which they imported could only be procured from his private gardens, where it sprung from one of the trees that had bloomed in the gardens of the Hesperides. The Vraibleusians were at first a little surprised at this information, but the old tradition of the market-gardener was certainly a very improbable one; and the excellence of the fruit, and the importance assumed by those who supplied it, were deemed exceedingly good evidence of the truth of the present story. When the dealers had repeated their new tale for a certain number of years, there

was not an individual in the island who in the slightest degree suspected its veracity. One more century, and no person had ever heard that any suspicions had ever existed.

The immediate agents of the Prince of the World could, of course, be no common personages; and the servants of the gardener, who some centuries before had meekly disclaimed the proffered reverence of his delighted customers, now insisted upon constant adoration from every eater of pine-apples in the island. In spite, however, of the arrogance of the dealers, of their refusal to be responsible to the laws of the country in which they lived, and of the universal precedence which, on all occasions, was claimed even by the shop-boys, so decided was the taste which the Vraibleusians had acquired for pine-apples, that there is little doubt, that had the dealers in this delicious fruit been contented with the respect and influence and profit which were the consequences of their vocation, the Vraibleusians would never have presumed to have grumbled at their arrogance, or to have questioned their privileges. But the agents, wearied of the limited sphere to which their exertions were confined, and encouraged by the success which every new claim and pretence on their part invariably experienced, began to evince an inclination to interfere in other affairs besides those of fruit; and even expressed their willingness to undertake no less an office than the Management of the Statue.

A century or two were solely occupied by conflicts occasioned by the unreasonable ambition of these dealers in pine-apples. Such great political effects could be produced by men apparently so unconnected with politics as market-gardeners! Ever supported by the lower ranks, whom they supplied with fruit of the most exquisite flavour without charge, they were, for a long time, often the successful opponents, always the formidable adversaries, of the Vraibleusian aristocracy; who were the objects of their envy, and the victims of their rapaciousness. The Government at last, by a vigorous effort, triumphed. In spite of the wishes of the majority of the nation, the whole of the dealers were one day expelled the island, and the Managers of the Statue immediately took possession of their establishments.

By distributing the stock of fruit which was on hand very liberally, the Government, for a short time, reconciled the people to the change; but as their warehouses became daily less furnished

they were daily reminded, that unless some system were soon adopted, the Islanders must be deprived of a luxury to which they had been so long accustomed, that its indulgence had, in fact, become a second nature. No one of the managers had the hardihood to propose a recurrence to horse-chestnuts. Pride and Fear alike forbade a return to their old purveyor. Other fruits there were, which, in spite of the contract with the market-gardener, had at various times been secretly introduced into the island; but they had never greatly flourished, and the Statue was loth to recommend to the notice of his subjects, productions—an indulgence in which, through the instigation of the recently-expelled agents—it had so often denounced as detrimental to the health, and had so often discouraged by the severest punishments.

At this difficult and delicate crisis, when even expedients seemed exhausted and statesmen were at fault, the genius of an individual offered a substitute. An inventive mind discovered the power of propagating suckers. The expelled dealers had either been ignorant of this power, or had concealed their knowledge of it. They ever maintained that it was impossible for pine-apples to grow except in one spot, and that the whole earth must be supplied from the gardens of the palace of the Prince of the World. Now the Vraibleusians were flattered with the patriotic fancy of eating pine-apples of a home-growth; and the blessed fortune of that nation, which did not depend for their supply of fruit upon a foreign country, was eagerly expatiated on. Secure from extortion, and independent of caprice, the Vraibleusians were no longer to be insulted by the presence of foreigners; who, while they violated their laws with impunity, referred the Vraibleusians, when injured and complaining, to a foreign master.

No doubt this appeal to the patriotism, and the common sense, and the vanity, of the nation, would have been exceedingly successful, had not the produce of the suckers been both inferior in size and deficient in flavour. The Vraibleusians tasted and shook their heads. The supply, too, was as imperfect as the article; for the Government gardeners were but sorry horticulturists, and were ever making experiments and alterations in their modes of culture. The article was scarce, though the law had decreed it universal; and the Vraibleusians were obliged to feed upon fruit which they considered at the same time both poor and expensive. They protested as strongly against the present system, as its pro-

mulgators had protested against the former one; and they revenged themselves for their grievances by breaking the shop-windows.

As any result was preferable in the view of the Statue, to the re-introduction of foreign fruit and foreign agents; and as the Managers considered it highly important that an indissoluble connection should in future exist between the Government and so influential and profitable a branch of trade, they determined to adopt the most vigorous measures to infuse a taste for suckers in the discontented populace. But the eating of fruit being clearly a matter of taste, it is evidently a habit which should rather be encouraged by a plentiful supply of exquisite produce, than enforced by the introduction of burning and bayonets. The consequences of the strong measures of the Government were, universal discontent and partial rebellion. The Islanders, foolishly ascribing the miseries which they endured, not so much to the folly of the Government, as to the particular fruit through which the dissensions had originated, began to entertain a disgust for pine-apples altogether, and to sicken at the very mention of that production which had once occasioned them so much pleasure, and which had once commanded such decided admiration. They universally agreed, that there were many other fruits in the world besides Pine-apple, which had been too long neglected. One dilated on the rich flavour of Melon; another panegyrised Pumpkin, and offered to make up by quantity for any slight deficiency in *gout*: Cherries were not without their advocates: Strawberries were not forgotten. One maintained that the Fig had evidently been pointed out for the established fruit of all countries; while another asked, with a reeling eye, whether they need go far to seek, when a God had condescended to preside over the Grape! In short, there was not a fruit which flourishes that did not find its votaries. Strange to say, another foreign product, imported from a neighbouring country famous for its barrenness, counted the most; and the fruit faction, which chiefly frightened the Vraileusian Government, was an acid set, who crammed themselves with Crab-apples.

It was this party which first seriously and practically conceived the idea of utterly abolishing the ancient custom of eating pine-apples. While they themselves professed to devour no other fruit save crabs, they at the same time preached the doctrine of an universal

fruit toleration, which they showed would be the necessary and natural consequence of the destruction of the old monopoly. Influenced by these representations, the great body of the people openly joined the Crab-apple men in their open attacks. The minority, who still retained a taste for pines, did not yield without an arduous though ineffectual struggle. During the riots occasioned by this rebellion, the hall of audience was broken open, and the miraculous Statue, which was reputed to have a great passion for pine-apples, dashed to the ground. The Managers were either slain or disappeared. The whole affairs of the kingdom were conducted by a body called "the Fruit Committee;" and thus a total revolution of the Government of Vraibleusia was occasioned by the prohibition of foreign pine-apples. What an argument in favour of free trade!

Every fruit, except that one which had so recently been supported by the influence of authority and the terrors of law, might now be seen and devoured in the streets of Hubbabub. In one corner men were sucking oranges, as if they had lived their whole lives on salt: in another, stuffing pumpkin, like cannibals at their first child. Here one took in at a mouthful a bunch of grapes, from which might have been pressed a good quart. Another was lying on the ground from a surfeit of mulberries. The effect of this irrational excess will be conceived by the judicious reader. Calcutta itself never suffered from a cholera morbus half so fearful. Thousands were dying. Were I Thucydides or Boccaccio, I would write pages on this plague. The commonwealth itself must soon have yielded its ghost, for all order had ceased throughout the island, ever since they had deserted pine-apples. There was no Government: anarchy alone was perfect. Of the Fruit Committee, many of the members were dead, or dying, and the rest were robbing orchards.

At this moment of disorganisation and dismay, a stout soldier, one of the crab-apple faction, who had possessed sufficient command over himself, in spite of the seeming voracity of his appetite, not to indulge to a dangerous excess, made his way one morning into the old Hall of Audience, and there groping about, succeeded in finding the golden head of the Statue; which placing on the hilt of his sword, the point of which he had stuck in the pedestal, he announced to the city, that he had discovered the secret of conversing with this wonderful piece of mechanism; and that in

future he would take care of the health and fortune of the State.

There were some who thought it rather strange that the head-piece should possess the power of resuming its old functions, although deprived of the aid of the body which contained the greater portion of the machinery. As it was evidently well supported by the sword, they were not surprised that it should stand without the use of its legs. But the stout soldier was the only one in the island who enjoyed the blessing of health. He was fresh, vigorous, and vigilant; they, exhausted, weak, and careless of everything except cure. He soon took measures for the prevention of future mischief, and for the cure of present; and when his fellow-islanders had recovered, some were grateful, others fearful, and all obedient.

So long as the stout soldier lived, no dissensions on the subject of fruit ever broke out. Although he himself never interfered in the sale of the article, and never attempted to create another monopoly, still, by his influence and authority, he prevented any excess being occasioned by the Fruit toleration which was enjoyed. Indeed the Vraibleusians themselves had suffered so severely from their late indiscretions, that such excesses were not likely again to occur. People began to discover that it was not quite so easy a thing as they had imagined for every man to be his own Fruiterer; and that gardening was a craft, which, like others, required great study, long practice, and early experience. Unable to supply themselves, the majority became the victims of quack traders. They sickened of spongy apricots, and foxy pears, and withered plums, and blighted apples, and tasteless berries. They at length suspected that a nation might fare better if its race of fruiterers were overseen and supported by the State,—if their skill and their market were alike secured. Although, no longer being tempted to suffer from a surfeit, the health of the Islanders had consequently recovered, this was, after all, but a negative blessing; and they sadly missed a luxury once so reasonable and so refreshing. They sighed for an established fruit, and a protected race of cultivators. But the stout soldier was so sworn an enemy to any Government Fruit, and so decided an admirer of the least delightful, that the people, having no desire of being forced to eat crab-apples, only longed for more delicious food in silence.

At length the stout soldier died, and on the night of his death the sword, which had so long supported the pretended Government, snapped in twain. No arrangement existed for carrying on the administration of affairs. The master-mind was gone, without having imparted the secret of conversing with the golden head to any successor. The people assembled in agitated crowds. Each knew his neighbour's thoughts without their being declared. All smacked their lips, and a cry for pine-apples rent the skies.

At this moment the Aboriginal Inhabitant appeared, and announced, that in examining the old Hall of Audience, which had been long locked up, he had discovered in a corner where they had been flung by the stout soldier when he stole away the head, the remaining portions of the Statue; that they were quite uninjured, and that on fixing the head once more upon them, and winding up the works, he was delighted to find that this great work of his ancestor, under whose superintendence the nation had so flourished, resumed all its ancient functions. The people were in a state of mind for a miracle, and they hailed the joyful wonder with shouts of triumph. The Statue was placed under the provisional care of the Aboriginal. All arrangements for its superintendence were left to his discretion; and its advice was instantly to be taken upon that subject which at present was nearest the people's hearts.

But that subject was encompassed with difficulties. Pine-apples could only be again procured by an application to the Prince of the World, whose connection they had rejected; and by an introduction into the island of those foreign agents, who, now convinced that the Vraibleusians could not exist without their presence, would be more arrogant and ambitious and turbulent than ever. Indeed the Aboriginal feared that the management of the Statue would be the *sine qua non* of negotiation with the Prince. If this were granted, it was clear that Vraibleusia must in future only rank as a dependent state of a foreign power, since the direction of the whole island would actually be at the will of the supplier of pine-apples. Ah! this mysterious taste for fruit! In politics it has often occasioned infinite embarrassment.

At this critical moment the Aboriginal received information, that although the eating of pine-apples had been utterly abolished, and although it was generally supposed that a specimen of this fruit had long ceased to exist in the country, nevertheless a body

of persons, chiefly consisting of the descendants of the Government gardeners, who had succeeded the foreign agents, and who had never lost their taste for this pre-eminent fruit, had long been in the habit of secretly raising, for their private eating, pine-apples from the produce of those suckers which had originally excited such odium, and occasioned such misfortunes. Long practice, they said, and infinite study, had so perfected them in this art, that they now succeeded in producing pine-apples which, both for size and flavour, were not inferior to the boasted produce of a foreign clime. Their specimens verified their assertion, and the whole nation were invited to an instant trial. The long interval which had elapsed since any man had enjoyed a treat so agreeable, lent, perhaps, an additional flavour to that which was really excellent; and so enraptured and enthusiastic were the great majority of the people, that the propagators of suckers would have had no difficulty, had they pushed the point, in procuring as favourable and exclusive a contract as the market gardener of ancient days.

But the Aboriginal and his advisers were wisely mindful, that the passions of a people are not arguments for legislation; and they felt conscious that when the first enthusiasm had subsided, and when their appetites were somewhat satisfied, the discontented voices of many who had been long used to other fruits, would be recognised even amidst the shouts of the majority. They therefore greatly qualified the contract between the nation and the present fruiterers. An universal Toleration of Fruit was allowed; but no man was to take office under Government, or enter the services, or in any way become connected with the Court, who was not supplied from the Government depôts.

Since this happy restoration, Pine-apple has remained the established fruit of the Island of Vraibleusia; and, it must be confessed, has been found wonderfully conducive to the health and happiness of the Islanders. Some sectarians still remain obstinate, or tasteless enough, to prefer pumpkin, or gorge the most acid apples, or chew the commonest pears; but they form a slight minority, which will gradually altogether disappear. The votaries of Pine-apple pretend to observe the characteristic effect which such food produces upon the feeders. They denounce them as stupid, sour, and vulgar.

But while, notwithstanding an universal toleration, such

unanimity of taste apparently prevails throughout the island, as if Fruit were a subject of such peculiar nicety, that difference of opinion must necessarily rise among men, great Fruit factions even now prevail in Vraibleusia; and what is more extraordinary, prevail even among the admirers of pine-apples themselves. Of these, the most important is a sect which professes to discover a natural deficiency, not only in all other fruits, but even in the finest pine-apples. Fruit, they maintain, should never be eaten in the state in which Nature yields it to man; and they consequently are very indefatigable in prevailing upon the less discriminating part of mankind, to heighten the flavour of their pine-apples with ginger, or even with pepper. Although they profess to adopt these stimulants from the great admiration which they entertain for a high flavour, there are, nevertheless, some less ardent people, who suspect, that they rather have recourse to them from the weakness of their digestion.

CHAPTER XV.

As his Excellency Prince Popanilla really could not think of being annoyed by the attentions of the mob during his visit to Blunderland, he travelled quite in a quiet way, under the name of the Chevalier de Fantaisie; and was accompanied only by Skindeep and two attendants. As Blunderland was one of the islands of the Vraibleusian Archipelago, they arrived there after the sail of a few hours.

The country was so beautiful, that the Chevalier was almost reminded of Fantaisie. Green meadows and flourishing trees made him remember the railroads and canals of Vraibleusia without regret, or with disgust, which is much the same. The women were angelic, which is the highest praise; and the men the most light-hearted, merry, obliging, entertaining fellows, that he had met with in the whole course of his life. Oh! it was delicious!

After an hour's dashing drive, he arrived at a city which, had he not seen Hubbabub, he should have imagined was one of the most considerable in the world; but compared with the Vraibleusian capital it was a street.

Shortly after his arrival, according to the custom of the place, Popanilla joined the public-table of his hotel at dinner. He was rather surprised, that instead of knives and forks being laid for the convenience of the guests, the plates were flanked by daggers and pistols. As Popanilla now made a point of never asking a question of Skindeep, he addressed himself for information to his other neighbour, one of the civilest, most hospitable, and joyous rogues, that ever set a table in a roar. On Popanilla inquiring the reason of their using these singular instruments, his neighbour, with an air of great astonishment, confessed his ignorance of any people ever using any other; and, in his turn, asked how they could possibly eat their dinner without. The Chevalier was puzzled, but he was now too well bred ever to pursue an inquiry.

Popanilla being very thirsty, helped himself to a goblet of water, which was at hand. It was the most delightful water that he ever tasted. In a few minutes, he found that he was a little dizzy, and supposing this megrim to be occasioned by the heat of the room, he took another draught of water to recover himself.

As his neighbour was telling him a very excellent joke, a man entered the room, and shot the joker through the head. The opposite guest immediately charged his pistol with effect, and revenged the loss. A party of men, well armed, now rushed in, and a brisk conflict immediately ensued. Popanilla, who was very dizzy, was fortunately pushed under the table. When the firing and slashing had ceased, he ventured to crawl out. He found that the assailants had been beaten off, though unfortunately with the total loss of all the guests, who lay lifeless about the room. Even the prudent Skindeep, who had sought refuge in a closet, had lost his nose, which was a pity; because, although this gentleman had never been in Blunderland before, he had passed his whole life in maintaining that the accounts of the disturbances in that country were greatly exaggerated. Popanilla rang the bell, and the waiters, who were remarkably attentive, swept away the dead bodies, and brought him a roasted potato for supper.

The Chevalier soon retired to rest. He found at the side of his bed, a blunderbuss, a cutlass, and a pike; and he was directed to secure the door of his chamber with a great chain and a massy iron bar. Feeling great confidence in his securities, although he was quite ignorant of the cause of alarm, and very much exhausted

V:y
A:λ

α D:α

γ V:y

with the bustle of the day, he enjoyed sounder sleep than had refreshed him for many weeks. He was awakened in the middle of the night by a loud knocking at his door. He immediately seized his blunderbuss, but recognising the voice of his own valet, he only took his pike. His valet told him to unbar without loss of time, for the house had been set on fire. Popanilla immediately made his escape, but found himself surrounded by the incendiaries. He gave himself up for lost, when a sudden charge of cavalry brought him off in triumph. He was convinced of the utility of light-horse.

The military had arrived with such despatch, that the fire was the least effective that had wakened the house for the whole week. It was soon extinguished, and Popanilla again retired to his bedroom, not forgetting his bar and his chain.

In the morning, Popanilla was roused by his landlord, who told him that a large party was about to partake of the pleasures of the chace, and most politely inquired whether he would like to join them. Popanilla assented, and after having eaten an excellent breakfast, and received a favourable bulletin of Skindeep's wound, he mounted his horse. The party was numerous and well armed. Popanilla inquired of a huntsman what sport they generally followed in Blunderland. According to the custom of this country, where they never give a direct answer, the huntsman said that he did not know that there was any other sport but one. Popanilla thought him a brute, and dug his spurs into his horse.

They went off at a fine rate, and the exercise was most exhilarating. In a short time, as they were cantering along a defile, they received a sharp fire from each side, which rather reduced their numbers; but they revenged themselves for this loss, when they regained the plain, where they burnt two villages, slew two or three hundred head of women, and bagged children without number. On their return home to dinner, they chased a small body of men over a heath for nearly two hours, which afforded good sport; but they did not succeed in running them down, as they themselves were in turn chased by another party. Altogether, the day was not deficient in interest; and Popanilla found in the evening his powers of digestion improved.

After passing his days in this manner for about a fortnight, Popanilla perfectly recovered from his dyspepsia; and Skindeep's wound having now healed, he retired with regret from this healthy

climate. He took advantage of the leisure moment which was afforded during the sail, to inquire the reason of the disturbed state of this interesting country. He was told, that it was in consequence of the majority of the inhabitants persisting in importing their own Pine-apples.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON his return to Hubbabub, the Chevalier de Fantaisie found the city in the greatest confusion. The military were marshalled in all directions—the streets were lined with field-pieces—no one was abroad—all the shops were shut. Although not a single vehicle was visible, Popanilla's progress was slow, from the quantity of shells of all kinds which choked up the public way. When he arrived at his hotel, he found that all the windows were broken. He entered, and his landlord immediately presented him with his bill. As the landlord was pressing, and as Popanilla wished for an opportunity of showing his confidence in Skindeep's friendship, he requested him to pay the amount. Skindeep sent a messenger immediately to his banker; deeming an ambassador almost as good security as a nation, which we all know to be the very best.

This little arrangement being concluded, the landlord resumed his usual civility. He informed the travellers, that the whole island was in a state of the greatest commotion, and that martial law universally prevailed. He said that this disturbance was occasioned by the return of the expedition destined to the Isle of Fantaisie. It appeared, from his account, that after sailing about from New Guinea to New Holland, the expedition had been utterly unable not only to reach their new customers, but even to obtain the slightest intelligence of their locality. No such place as Fantaisie was known at Ceylon. Sumatra gave information equally unsatisfactory. Java shook its head. Celebes conceived the inquirers were jesting. The Philippine Isles offered to accommodate them with spices, but could assist them in no other way. Had it not been too hot at Borneo, they would have fairly laughed outright. The Maldives and the Moluccas, the Luccadives and the Andamans, were nearly as impertinent. The five hundred ships, and the judiciously-assorted cargo, were therefore under the necessity of returning home.

No sooner, however, had they reached Vraibleusia, than the markets were immediately glutted with the unsold goods. All the manufacturers, who had been working day and night in preparing for the next expedition, were instantly thrown out of employ. A run commenced on the Government Bank. That institution perceived too late, that the issues of pink shells had been too unrestricted. As the Emperor of the East had all the gold, the Government Bank only protected itself from failure by bayonetting its creditors. The manufacturers, who were starving, consoled themselves for the absence of food, by breaking all the windows in the country with the discarded shells. Every tradesman failed. The shipping-interest advertised two or three fleets for firewood. Riots were universal. The Aboriginal was attacked on all sides, and made so stout a resistance, and broke so many cudgels on the backs of his assailants, that it was supposed he would be finally exhausted by his own exertions. The public funds sunk ten per cent. daily. All the Millionaires crashed. In a word, dismay, disorganisation, despair, pervaded in all directions, the wisest, the greatest, and the richest nation in the world. The master of the hotel added, with an air of becoming embarrassment, that had not his Excellency been fortunately absent, he probably would not have had the pleasure of detailing to him this little narrative; that he had often been inquired for by the populace at his old balcony; and that a crowd had perpetually surrounded the house till within the last day, when a report had got about that his Excellency had turned into steam and disappeared. He added, that caricatures of his Highness might be procured in any shop, and his account of his voyage obtained at less than half-price.

"Ah!" said Popanilla, in a tone of great anguish, "and all this from losing a lock of hair!"

At this moment, the messenger whom Skindeep had despatched, returned, and informed him with great regret, that his banker, to whom he had entrusted his whole fortune, had been so unlucky as to stop payment during his absence. It was expected, however, that when his stud was sold, a respectable dividend might be realised. This was the personage of prepossessing appearance, who had presented Popanilla with a perpetual ticket to his picture-gallery. On examining the banker's accounts, it was discovered, that his chief loss had been incurred by supporting that

competition establishment, where purses were bought full of crowns.

In spite of his own misfortunes, Popanilla hastened to console his friend. He explained to him, that things were not quite so bad as they appeared; that society consisted of two classes—those who laboured, and those who paid the labourers—that each class was equally useful, because, if there were none to pay, the labourers would not be remunerated; and if there were none to labour, the payers would not be accommodated: that Skindeep might still rank in one of these classes; that he might therefore still be an useful member of society; that if he were useful, he must therefore be good; and that, if he were good, he must therefore be happy; because Happiness is the consequence of assisting the beneficial development of the ameliorating principles of the social action.

As he was speaking, two gentlemen in blue, with red waistcoats, entered the chamber, and seized Popanilla by the collar. The Vraibleusian Government, which is so famous for its interpretation of National Law, had arrested the Ambassador for high-treason.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PRISON conveyed the most lugubrious ideas to the mind of the unhappy Plenipotentiary; and shut up in a hackney-coach, with a man on each side of him with a cocked pistol, he formed the most gloomy conceptions of dark dungeons, confined cells, overwhelming fetters, black bread, and green water. He arrived at the principal gaol in Hubbabub. He was ushered into an elegantly furnished apartment, with French sash windows and a piano. Its lofty walls were entirely hung with a fanciful paper, which represented a Tuscan vineyard; the ceiling was covered with sky and clouds; roses were in abundance; and the windows, though well secured, excited no jarring associations in the mind of the individual they illumined, protected, as they were, by polished bars of cut-steel. This retreat had been fitted up by a poetical politician, who had recently been confined for declaring that the Statue was an old idol, originally imported from the

Sandwich Isles. Taking up a brilliantly bound volume, which reposed upon a rosewood table, Popanilla recited aloud a sonnet to Liberty; but the account given of the goddess by the bard was so confused, and he seemed so little acquainted with his subject, that the reader began to suspect it was an effusion of the gaoler.

Next to being a Plenipotentiary, Popanilla preferred being a prisoner. His daily meals consisted of every delicacy in season: a marble bath was ever at his service; a billiard-room and dumb-bells always ready; and his old friends, the most eminent physician, and the most celebrated practitioner in Hubbabub, called upon him daily to feel his pulse and look at his tongue. These attentions authorised a hope that he might yet again be an Ambassador; that his native land might still be discovered, and its resources still be developed: but when his gaoler told him, that the rest of the prisoners were treated in a manner equally indulgent, because the Vraibleusians are the most humane people in the world, Popanilla's spirits became somewhat depressed.

He was greatly consoled, however, by a daily visit from a body of the most beautiful, the most accomplished, and the most virtuous females in Hubbabub; who tasted his food to see that his cook did his duty, recommended him a plentiful use of pine-apple well peppered, and made him a present of a very handsome shirt, with worked frills and ruffles, to be hanged in. This enchanting committee generally confined their attentions to murderers, and other victims of the passions, who were deserted in their hour of need by the rest of the society they had outraged; but Popanilla being a foreigner, a Prince, and a Plenipotentiary, and not ill-looking, naturally attracted a great deal of notice from those who desire the amelioration of their species.

Popanilla was so pleased with his mode of life, and had acquired such a taste for poetry, pine-apples, and pepper, since he had ceased to be an active member of society, that he applied to have his trial postponed, on the ground of the prejudice which had been excited against him by the public press. As his trial was at present inconvenient to the Government, the postponement was allowed on these grounds.

In the meantime, the public agitation was subsiding. The nation reconciled itself to the revolution in its fortunes. The *ci-devant* Millionaires were busied with retrenchment; the Government engaged in sweeping in as many pink shells as were lying about the

country; the mechanics contrived to live upon chalk and sea-weed; and as the Aboriginal would not give his corn away gratis, the Vraibleusians determined to give up bread. The intellectual part of the nation were intently interested in discovering the cause of the National Distress. One of the philosophers said, that it might all be traced to the effects of a war in which the Vraibleusians had engaged about a century before. Another showed, that it was altogether clearly ascribable to the pernicious custom of issuing pink shells; but if, instead of this mode of representing wealth, they had had recourse to blue shells, the nation would now have advanced to a state of prosperity, which it had never yet reached. A third, demonstrated to the satisfaction of himself and his immediate circle, that it was all owing to the Statue having recently been repaired with silver instead of iron. The public was unable to decide between these conflicting opinions; but they were still more desirous of finding out a remedy for the evil, than the cause of it.

An eloquent and philosophical writer, who entertains very consolatory opinions of human nature, has recently told us, that "it is in the nature of things that the intellectual wants of society should be supplied. Whenever the man is required—invariably the man will appear." So it happened in the present instance. A public instructor jumped up in the person of Mr. Flummery Flam—the least insinuating and the least plausible personage that ever performed the easy task of gulling a nation. His manners were vulgar, his voice was sharp, and his language almost unintelligible. Flummery Flam was a provisional optimist. He maintained that everything would be for the best, if the nation would only follow his advice. He told the Vraibleusians, that the present universal and overwhelming distress was all and entirely and merely to be ascribed to "a slight over-trading," and that all that was required to set everything right again was "a little time." He showed that this over-trading and every other injudicious act that had ever been committed, was entirely to be ascribed to the nation being imbued with erroneous and imperfect ideas of the nature of Demand and Supply. He proved to them, that if a tradesman cannot find customers, his goods will generally stay upon his own hands. He explained to the Aboriginal the meaning of *rent*; to the mechanics the nature of *wages*; to the manufacturers the signification of *profits*. He recommended that a large edition of

his own work should be printed at the public expense, and sold for his private profit. Finally, he explained how immediate, though temporary, relief would be afforded to the State, by the encouragement of EMIGRATION.

The Vraibleusians began to recover their spirits. The Government had the highest confidence in Flummery Flam, because Flummery Flam served to divert the public thoughts. By his direction, lectures were instituted at the corner of every street, to instil the right principles of politics into the mind of the great body of the people. Every person, from the Managers of the Statue down to the chalk-chewing mechanics, attended lectures on Flummery-Flammism. The Vraibleusians suddenly discovered, that it was the great object of a nation not to be the most powerful, or the richest, or the best, or the wisest, but to be the most Flummery-Flammistical.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day fixed for Popanilla's trial was at hand. The Prince was not unprepared for the meeting. For some weeks before the appointed day, he had been deeply studying the published speeches of the greatest rhetorician that flourished at the Vraibleusian bar. He was so inflated with their style, that he nearly blew down the gaoler every morning when he rehearsed a passage before him. Indeed, Popanilla looked forward to his trial with feelings of anticipated triumph. He determined boldly and fearlessly to state the principles upon which his public conduct had been founded, the sentiments he professed on most of the important subjects which interest mankind, and the views he entertained of the progress of society. He would then describe, in the most glowing language, the domestic happiness which he enjoyed in his native isle. He would paint, in harrowing sentences, the eternal misery and disgrace which his ignominious execution would entail upon the grey-headed father, who looked up to him as a prop for his old age—the affectionate mother, who perceived in him her husband again a youth—the devoted wife, who could never survive his loss—and the sixteen children, chiefly girls, whom his death would infallibly send upon the parish. This, with an eulo-

gistic peroration on the moral qualities of the Vraibleusians, and the political importance of Vraibleusia, would, he had no doubt, not only save his neck, but even gain him a moderate pension.

The day arrived, the Court was crowded, and Popanilla had the satisfaction of observing in the newspapers, that tickets for the best gallery, to witness his execution, were selling at a premium.

The indictment was read. He listened to it with intense attention. To his surprise, he found himself accused of stealing two hundred and nineteen Camelopards. All was now explained. He perceived that he had been mistaken the whole of this time for another person. He could not contain himself. He burst into an exclamation. He told the judge, in a voice of mingled delight, humility, and triumph, that it was possible he might be guilty of high-treason, because he was ignorant of what the crime consisted—but as for stealing two hundred and nineteen Camelopards, he declared that such a larceny was a moral impossibility, because he had never seen one such animal in the whole course of his life.

The judge was most kind and considerate. He told the prisoner that the charge of stealing Camelopards was a fiction of law; that he had no doubt he had never seen one in the whole course of his life, nor in all probability had any one in the whole Court. He explained to Popanilla, that originally, this animal greatly abounded in Vraibleusia; that the present Court, the highest and most ancient in the kingdom, had then been instituted for the punishment of all those who molested or injured that splendid animal. The species, his lordship continued, had been long extinct; but the Vraibleusians, duly reverencing the institutions of their ancestors, had never presumed to abrogate the authority of the Camelopard Court, or invest any other with equal privileges. Therefore, his Lordship added, in order to try you in this Court for a modern offence of high treason, you must first be introduced by fiction of law as a stealer of Camelopards, and then being *in præsentia regio*, in a manner, we proceed to business by a special power for the absolute offence. Popanilla was so confounded by the kindness of the judge, and the clearness of his lordship's statement, that he quite lost the thread of his peroration.

The trial proceeded. Everybody with whom Popanilla had conversed during his visit to Vraibleusia was subpoenaed against him, and the evidence was conclusive. Skindeep, who was brought

up by a warrant from the King's Bench, proved the fact of Popanilla's landing; and that he had given himself out as a political exile, the victim of a tyrant, a corrupt aristocracy, and a misguided people. But either from a secret feeling towards his former friend, or from his aversion to answer questions, this evidence was on the whole not very satisfactory.

The bookseller proved the publication of that fatal volume, whose deceptive and glowing statements were alone sufficient to ensure Popanilla's fate. It was in vain that the author avowed that he had never written a line of his own book. This only made his imposture more evident. The little philosopher, with whom he had conversed at Lady Spirituelle's, and who, being a friend of Flummery Flam, had now obtained a place under Government, invented the most condemning evidence. The Marquess of Moustache sent in a state paper, desiring to be excused from giving evidence, on account of the delicate situation in which he had been placed with regard to the prisoner; but he referred them to his former Private Secretary, who, he had no doubt, would afford every information. Accordingly, the President of Fort Jobation, who had been brought over specially, finished the business.

The Judge, although his family had suffered considerably by the late madness for speculation, summed up in the most impartial manner. He told the jury, that although the case was quite clear against the prisoner, they were bound to give him the advantage of every reasonable doubt. The foreman was about to deliver the verdict, when a trumpet sounded, and a Government messenger ran breathless into Court. Presenting a scroll to the presiding genius, he informed him that a remarkably able young man, recently appointed one of the Managers of the Statue, in consequence of the inconvenience which the public sustained from the innumerable quantity of edicts of the Statue at present in force, had last night consolidated them all into this single act; which, to render its operation still more simple, was gifted with a retrospective power for the last half century.

His lordship, looking over the scroll, passed a high eulogium upon the young consolidator; compared to whom, he said, Justinian was a country attorney. Observing, however, that the crime of high treason had been accidentally omitted in the consolidated legislation of Vraibleusia, he directed the jury to find the prisoner "not guilty." As in Vraibleusia the law believes

every man's character to be perfectly pure, until a jury of twelve persons finds the reverse, Popanilla was kicked out of court, amid the hootings of the mob, without a stain upon his reputation.

It was very late in the evening when he left the court. Exhausted both in mind and body, the mischief being now done, and being totally unemployed, according to custom he began to moralize. "I begin to perceive," said he, "that it is possible for a nation to exist in too artificial a state—that a people may both think too much and do too much. All here exists in a state of exaggeration. The nation itself professes to be in a situation in which it is impossible for any nation ever to be naturally placed. To maintain themselves in this false position, they necessarily have recourse to much destructive conduct, and to many fictitious principles. And as the character of a people is modelled on that of their Government, in private life, this system of exaggeration equally prevails, and equally produces a due quantity of ruinous actions, and false sentiment! In the meantime, I am starving, and dare not show my face in the light of day!"

As he said this, the house opposite was suddenly lit up, and the words "EMIGRATION COMMITTEE" were distinctly visible on a transparent blind. A sudden resolution entered Popanilla's mind to make an application to this body. He entered the Committee-room, and took his place at the end of a row of individuals, who were severally examined. When it was his turn to come forward, he began to tell his story from the beginning, and would certainly have got to the lock of hair, had not the President enjoined silence. Popanilla was informed, that the last Emigration-squadron was about to sail in a few minutes; and that although the number was completed, his broad shoulders and powerful frame had gained him a place. He was presented with a spade, a blanket, and a hard biscuit; and in a quarter of an hour was quitting the port of Hubbabub.

"Once more upon the waters—yet once more!"

As the Emigration-squadron quitted the harbour, two large fleets hove in sight. The first was the expedition which had been despatched against the decapitating King of the North, and which now returned, heavily laden with his rescued subjects. The other was the force which had flown to the preservation of the body of the decapitated King of the South, and which now brought back

his Majesty embalmed, some Princes of the blood, and an emigrant Aristocracy.

What became of the late Fantaisian Ambassador, whether he were destined for Van Diemen's Land, or for Canada; what rare adventures he experienced in Sydney, or Port Jackson, or Guelph City, or Goodrich Town; and whether he discovered, that man might exist in too natural a state, as well as in too artificial a one; will probably be discovered, if ever we obtain Captain Popanilla's Second Voyage.

COUNT ALARCOS:
A TRAGEDY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

As there is no historical authority for the events of the celebrated Ballad on which this Tragedy is founded, I have fixed upon the thirteenth century for the period of their occurrence. At that time the kingdom of Castille had recently obtained that supremacy in Spain which led, in a subsequent age, to the political integrity of the country. Burgos, its capital, was a magnificent city; and then also arose that master-piece of Christian architecture, its famous Cathedral.

This state of comparative refinement and civilisation permitted the introduction of more complicated motives than the rude manners of the Ballad would have authorized; while the picturesque features of the Castilian middle ages still flourished in full force; the factions of a powerful nobility, renowned for their turbulence, strong passions, enormous crimes, profound superstition.

Δ.

London, May, 1839.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE KING OF CASTILLE.

COUNT ALARCOS, a Prince of the Blood.

COUNT OF SIDONIA.

COUNT OF LEON.

PRIOR OF BURGOS.

ORAN, a Moor.

FERDINAND, a Page.

GUZMAN JACA, a Bravo.

GRAUS, the Keeper of a Posada.

SOLISA, Infanta of Castille, only child of the King.

FLORIMONDE, Countess Alarcos.

FLIX, a Hostess.

Courtiers, Pages, Chamberlains, Bravos, and Priests.

Time—the 13th Century.

Scene—Burgos, the capital of Castille, and its vicinity.

COUNT ALARCOS:

A TRAGEDY.

A C T I.

SCENE 1.

A Street in Burgos ; the Cathedral in the distance.

Enter TWO COURTIERS.

1ST COUR.

THE Prince of Hungary dismissed?

2ND COUR.

Indeed

So runs the rumour.

1ST COUR.

Why the spousal note
Still floats upon the air!

2ND COUR.

Myself this morn
Beheld the Infanta's entrance, as she threw,
Proud as some bitless barb, her haughty glance
On our assembled chiefs.

1ST COUR.

The Prince was there?

2ND COUR.

Most royally ; nor seemed a man more fit
 To claim a kingdom for a dower. He looked
 Our Gadian Hercules, as the advancing peers
 Their homage paid. I followed in the train
 Of Count Alarcos, with whose ancient house
 My fortunes long have mingled.

1ST COUR.

'Tis the same,
 But just returned ?

2ND COUR.

Long banished from the Court ;
 And only favoured since the Queen's decease,
 His ancient foe.

1ST COUR.

A very potent Lord ?

2ND COUR.

Near to the throne ; too near perchance for peace.
 You're young at Burgos, or indeed 'twere vain
 To sing Alarcos' praise, the brightest knight
 That ever waved a lance in Old Castille.

1ST COUR.

You followed in his train ?

2ND COUR.

And as we passed,
 Alarcos bowing to the lowest earth,
 The Infanta swooned ; and pale as yon niched saint,
 From off the throned step, her seat of place,
 Fell in a wild and senseless agony.

1ST COUR.

Sancta Maria ! and the King—

2ND COUR.

Uprose
 And bore her from her maidens, then broke up
 The hurried Court ; indeed I know no more ;

For like a turning tide the crowd pressed on,
And scarcely could I gain the grateful air.
Yet on the Prado's walk came smiling by
The Bishop of Ossuna; as he passed
He clutched my cloak, and whispered in my ear,
"The match is off."

(*Enter PAGE.*)

1ST COUR.

Hush! hush! a passenger.

PAGE.

Most noble Cavaliers, I pray, inform me
Where the great Count Alarcos holds his quarter.

2ND COUR.

In the chief square. His banner tells the roof;
Your pleasure with the Count, my gentle youth?

PAGE.

I were a sorry messenger to tell
My mission to the first who asks its aim.

2ND COUR.

The Count Alarcos is my friend and chief.

PAGE.

Then better reason I should trusty be,
For you can be a witness to my trust.

1ST COUR.

A forward youth!

2ND COUR.

A Page is ever pert.

PAGE.

Ay! ever pert is youth that baffles age.

[*Exit PAGE.*]

1ST COUR.

The Count is married?

2ND COUR.

To a beauteous lady ;
 And blessed with a fair race. A happy man
 Indeed is Count Alarcos.

[*A trumpet sounds.*]

1ST COUR.

Prithee, see ;

Passes he now ?

2ND COUR.

Long since. Yon banner tells
 The Count Sidonia. Let us on, and view
 The passage of his pomp. His Moorish steeds,
 They say, are very choice.

[*Exeunt Two COURTIERs.*]

 SCENE 2.

A Chamber in the Palace of Alarcos. The COUNTESS seated and working at her tapestry ; the COUNT pacing the Chamber.

COUN.

You are disturbed, Alarcos ?

ALAR.

'Tis the stir
 And tumult of this morn. I am not used
 To Courts.

COUN.

I know not why, it is a name
 That makes me tremble.

ALAR.

Tremble, Florimonde,
 Why should you tremble ?

COUN.

Sooth I cannot say.
 Methinks the Court but little suits my kind ;
 I love our quiet home.

ALAR.

This is our home.

COUN.

When you are here.

ALAR.

I will be always here.

COUN.

Thou canst not, sweet Alarcos. Happy hours,
When we were parted but to hear thy horn
Sound in our native woods!

ALAR.

Why, this is humour!
We're courtiers now; and we must smile and smirk.

COUN.

Methinks your tongue is gayer than your glance.
The King, I hope, was gracious?

ALAR.

Were he not,
My frown's as prompt as his. He was most gracious.

COUN.

Something has chafed thee?

ALAR.

What should chafe me, child
And when should hearts be light, if mine be dull?
Is not mine exile over? Is it nought
To breathe in the same house where we were born,
And sleep where slept our fathers? Should that chafe

COUN.

Yet didst thou leave my side this very morn,
And with a vow this day should ever count
Amid thy life most happy; when we meet
Thy brow is clouded.

ALAR.

Joy is sometimes grave,
And deepest when 'tis calm. And I am joyful,

If it be joy, this long forbidden hall
Once more to pace, and feel each fearless step
Treads on a baffled foe.

COUN.

Hast thou still foes?

ALAR.

I trust so ; I should not be what I am,
Still less what I will be, if hate did not
Pursue me as my shadow. Ah ! fair wife,
Thou knowest not Burgos. Thou hast yet to fathom
The depths of thy new world.

COUN.

I do recoil

As from some unknown woe, from this same world.
I thought we came for peace.

ALAR.

Peace dwells within

No lordly roof in Burgos. We have come
For triumph.

COUN.

So I share thy lot, Alarcos,
All feelings are the same.

ALAR.

My Florimonde,

I took thee from a fair and pleasant home
In a soft land, where, like the air they live in,
Men's hearts are mild. This proud and fierce Castille
Resembles not thy gentle Aquitaine,
More than the eagle may a dove, and yet
It is my country. Danger in its bounds
Weighs more than foreign safety. But why speak
Of what exists not?

COUN.

And I hope may never!

ALAR.

And if it come, what then? This chance shall find me
Not unprepared.

COUN.

But why should there be danger?
And why should'st thou, the foremost prince of Spain,
Fear or make foes? Thou standest in no light
Would fall on other shoulders; thou hast no height
To climb, and nought to gain. Thou art complete;
The King alone above thee, and thy friend.

ALAR.

So I would deem. I did not speak of fear.

COUN.

Of danger?

ALAR.

That's delight, when it may lead
To mighty ends. Ah, Florimonde! thou art too pure;
Unsoiled in the rough and miry paths
Of this same trampling world; unskilled in heats
Of fierce and emulous spirits. There's a rapture
In the strife of factions, that a woman's soul
Can never reach. Men smiled on me to-day
Would gladly dig my grave; and yet I smiled,
And gave them coin as ready as their own,
And not less base.

COUN.

And can there be such men,
And canst thou live with them?

ALAR.

Ay! and they saw
Me ride this morning in my state again;
The people cried "Alarcos and Castille!"
The shout will dull their feasts.

COUN.

There was a time
Thou didst look back as on a turbulent dream
On this same life.

ALAR.

I was an exile then.

This stirring Burgos has revived my vein.
 Yea, as I glanced from off the Citadel
 This very morn, and at my feet outspread
 Its amphitheatre of solemn towers
 And groves of golden pinnacles, and marked
 Turrets of friends and foes ; or traced the range,
 Spread since my exile, of our city's walls
 Washed by the swift Arlanzon : all around
 The flash of lances, blaze of banners, rush
 Of hurrying horsemen, and the haughty blast
 Of the soul-stirring trumpet,—I renounced
 My old philosophy, and gazed as gazes
 The falcon on his quarry !

COUN.

Jesu grant
 The lure will bear no harm ! [*A trumpet sounds.*]

ALAR.

Whose note is that ?
 I hear the tramp of horsemen in the court ;
 We have some guests.

COUN.

Indeed !

Enter the COUNT OF SIDONIA, and the COUNT OF LEON.

ALAR.

My noble friends,
 My Countess greets ye !

SIDO.

And indeed we pay
 To her our homage.

LEON.

Proud our city boasts
 So fair a presence.

COUN.

Count Alarcos' friends
 Are ever welcome here.

ALAR.

No common wife,
Who welcomes with a smile her husband's friends.

SIDO.

Indeed a treasure! When I marry, Count,
I'll claim your counsel.

COUN.

'Tis not then your lot?

SIDO.

Not yet, sweet dame; tho' sooth to say, full often
I dream such things may be.

COUN.

Your friend is free?

LEON.

And values freedom: with a rosy chain
I still should feel a captive.

SIDO.

Noble Leon

Is proof against the gentle passion, lady,
And will ere long, my rapier for a gage,
Marry a scold.

LEON.

In Burgos now, methinks,
Marriage is scarce the mode. Our princess frowns,
It seems, upon her suitors.

SIDO.

Is it true

The match is off?

LEON.

'Tis said.

COUN.

The match is off!

You did not tell me this strange news, Alarcos.

SIDO.

Did he not tell you how—

ALAR.

In truth, good sirs,
My wife and I are somewhat strangers here,
And things that are of moment to the minds
That long have dwelt on them, to us are nought.

(To the COUNTESS.)

There was a sort of scene to-day at Court;
The Princess fainted—we were all dismissed,
Somewhat abruptly; but, in truth, I deem
These rumours have no source but in the tongues
Of curious idlers.

SIDO.

Faith, I hold them true.
Indeed they're very rife.

LEON.

Poor man, methinks
His is a lot forlorn, at once to lose
A mistress and a crown!

COUN.

Yet both may bring
Sorrow and cares. But little joy, I ween,
Dwells with a royal bride, too apt to claim
The homage she should yield.

SIDO.

I would all wives
Held with your Countess in this pleasing creed.

ALAR.

She has her way: it is a cunning wench
That knows to wheedle. Burgos still maintains
Its fame for noble fabrics. Since my time
The city's spread.

SIDO.

Ah! you're a traveller, Count.
And yet we have not lagged.

COUN.

The Infanta, sirs,
Was it a kind of swoon?

ALAR.

Old Lara lives
Still in his ancient quarter?

LEON.

With the rats
That share his palace—You spoke, Madam?

COUN.

She
Has dainty health, perhaps?

LEON.

All ladies have.
And yet as little of the fainting mood
As one could fix on—

ALAR.

Mendola left treasure?

SIDO.

Wedges of gold, a chamber of sequins
Sealed up for ages, flocks of Barbary sheep
Might ransom princes, tapestry so rare
The King straight purchased, covering for the price
Each piece with pistoles.

COUN.

Is she very fair?

LEON.

As future queens must ever be, and yet
Her face might charm uncrowned.

COUN.

It grieves me much
To hear the Prince departs. 'Tis not the first
Among her suitors?

ALAR.

Your good uncle lives—
Nunez de Leon ?

LEON.

To my cost, Alarcos ;
He owes me much.

SIDO.

Some promises his heir
Would wish fulfilled.

COUN.

In Gascony, they said,
Navarre had sought her hand.

LEON.

He loitered here
But could not pluck the fruit : it was too high.
Sidonia threw him in a tilt one day.
The Infanta has her fancies ; unhorsed knights
Count not among them.

Enter a CHAMBERLAIN who whispers COUNT ALARCOS.

ALAR.

Urgent, and me alone
Will commune with ! A Page ! Kind guests, your pardon,
I'll find you here anon. My Florimonde,
Our friends will not desert you, like your spouse.

[*Exit* ALARCOS.

COUN.

My Lords, will see our gardens ?

SIDO.

We are favoured.

We wait upon your steps.

LEON.

And feel that roses
Will spring beneath them.

COUN.

You are an adept, Sir,
In our gay science.

LEON.

Faith, I stole it, lady,
From a loose Troubadour Sidonia keeps
To write his sonnets. *[Exeunt omnes.]*

SCENE 3.

*A Chamber.**Enter ALARCOS and PAGE.*

PAGE.

Will you wait here, my Lord?

ALAR.

I will, sir Page.

[Exit PAGE.]

The Bishop of Ossuna,—what would he?
He scents the prosperous ever. Ay! they'll cluster
Round this new hive. But I'll not house them yet.
Marry, I know them all; but me they know,
As mountains might the leaping stream that meets
The ocean as a river. Time and exile
Change our life's course, but is its flow less deep
Because it is more calm? I've seen to-day
Might stir its pools. What if my phantom flung
A shade on their bright path? 'Tis closed to me
Although the goal's a crown. She loved me once;
Now swoons, and now the match is off. She's true:
But I have clipped the heart that once could soar
High as her own! Dreams, dreams! And yet entranced,
Unto the fair phantasma that is fled,
My struggling fancy clings; for there are hours
When memory with her signet stamps the brain

With an undying mint ; and these were such,
 When high Ambition and enraptured Love,
 Twin Genii of my daring destiny,
 Bore on my sweeping life with their full wing,
 Like an angelic host :

[In the distance enter a lady veiled.

Is this their priest ?

Burgos unchanged I see.

[Advancing towards her.

A needless veil

To one prophetic of thy charms, fair lady.

And yet they fall on an ungracious eye.

[Withdraws the veil.

Solisa !

SOL.

Yes ! Solisa ; once again
 O say Solisa ! let that long lost voice
 Breathe with a name too faithful !

ALAR.

Oh ! what tones,
 What mazing sight is this ! The spell-bound forms
 Of my first youth rise up from the abyss
 Of opening time. I listen to a voice
 That bursts the sepulchre of buried hope
 Like an immortal trumpet.

SOL.

Thou hast granted,

MARY, my prayers !

ALAR.

Solisa, my Solisa !

SOL.

Thine, thine, Alarcos. But thou—whose art thou ?

ALAR.

Within this chamber is my memory bound ;
 I have no thought, no consciousness beyond
 Its precious walls.

SOL.

Thus did he look, thus speak,
When to my heart he clung, and I to him
Breathed my first love——and last.

ALAR.

Alas! alas!

Woe to thy Mother, maiden.

SOL.

She has found
That which I oft have prayed for.

ALAR.

But not found

A doom more dark than ours.

SOL.

I sent for thee,
To tell thee why I sent for thee; yet why,
Alas! I know not. Was it but to look
Alone upon the face that once was mine?
This morn it was so grave. O! was it woe,
Or but indifference, that inspired that brow
That seemed so cold and stately? Was it hate?
O! tell me anything, but that to thee
I am a thing of nothingness.

ALAR.

O spare!

Spare me such words of torture.

SOL.

Could I feel
Thou didst not hate me, that my image brought
At least a gentle, if not tender thoughts,
I'd be content. I cannot live to think,
After the past, that we should meet again
And change cold looks. We are not strangers, say
At least we are not strangers?

ALAR.

Gentle Princess—

SOL.

Call me Solisa; tho' we meet no more,
Call me Solisa now.

ALAR.

Thy happiness—

SOL.

O! no, no, no, not happiness, at least
Not from those lips.

ALAR.

Indeed it is a name
That ill becomes them.

SOL.

Yet they say, thou'rt happy,
And bright with all prosperity, and I
Felt solace in that thought.

ALAR.

Prosperity!

Men call them prosperous whom they deem enjoy
That which they envy; but there's no success
Save in one master-wish fulfilled, and mine
Is lost for ever.

SOL.

Why was it? O, why
Didst thou forget me?

ALAR.

Never, lady, never—
But ah! the past, the irrevocable past—
We can but meet to mourn.

SOL.

No, not to mourn,
I came to bless thee, came to tell to thee
I hoped that thou wert happy.

ALAR.

Come to mourn.
I'll find delight in my unbridled grief:

Yes! let me fling away at last this mask,
And gaze upon my woe.

SOL.

O, it was rash,
Indeed 'twas rash, Alarcos—what, sweet sir,
What, after all our vows, to hold me false,
And place this bar between us! I'll not think
Thou ever lovedst me as thou didst profess,
And that's the bitter drop.

ALAR.

Indeed, indeed,—

SOL.

I could bear much, I could bear all—but this.
My faith in thy past love, it was so deep,
So pure, so sacred, 'twas my only solace;
I fed upon it in my secret heart,
And now e'en that is gone.

ALAR.

Doubt not the past,
'Tis sanctified. It is the green fresh spot
In my life's desert.

SOL.

There is none to thee
As I have been? Speak, speak, Alarcos, tell me
Is't true? Or, in this shipwreck of my soul,
Do I cling wildly to some perishing hope
That sinks like me?

ALAR.

The May-burst of the heart
Can bloom but once; and mine has fled, not faded.
That thought gave fancied solace—ah, 'twas fancy,
For now I feel my doom.

SOL.

Thou hast no doom
But what is splendid as thyself. Alas!
Weak woman, when she stakes her heart, must play

Ever a fatal chance. It is her all,
And when 'tis lost, she's bankrupt; but proud man
Shuffles the cards again, and wins to-morrow
What pays his present forfeit.

ALAR.

But alas!

What have I won?

SOL.

A country and a wife.

ALAR.

A wife!

SOL.

A wife, and very fair, they say.
She should be fair, who could induce thee break
Such vows as thine. O! I am very weak.
Why came I here? Was it indeed to see
If thou could'st look on me?

ALAR.

My own Solisa—

SOL.

Call me not thine; why, what am I to thee
That thou should'st call me thine?

ALAR.

Indeed, sweet lady,
Thou lookest on a man as bruised in spirit,
As broken-hearted, and subdued in soul,
As any breathing wretch that deems the day
Can bring no darker morrow. Pity me!
And if kind words may not subdue those lips
So scornful in their beauty, be they touched
At least by Mercy's accents! Was't a crime,
I could not dare believe that royal heart
Retained an exile's image? that forlorn,
Harassed, worn out, surrounded by strange aspects
And stranger manners, in those formal ties

Custom points out, I sought some refuge, found
At least companionship, and, grant 'twas weak,
Shrunk from the sharp endurance of the doom
That waits on exile—utter loneliness!

SOL.

His utter loneliness!

ALAR.

And met thy name,
Most beauteous lady, prithee think of this,
Only to hear the princes of the world
Were thy hot suitors, and that one would soon
Be happier than Alarcos.

SOL.

False, most false,
They told thee false.

ALAR.

At least, then, pity me,
Solisa!

SOL.

Ah! Solisa—that sweet voice—
Why should I pity thee? 'Tis not my office.
Go, go to her that cheered thy loneliness,
Thy utter loneliness. And had I none?
Had I no pangs of solitude? Exile!
O! there were moments I'd have gladly given
My crown for banishment. A wounded heart
Beats freer in a desert; 'tis the air
Of palaces that chokes it.

ALAR.

Fate has crossed,
Not falsehood, our sweet loves. Our lofty passion
Is tainted with no vileness. Memory bears
Convulsion, not contempt; no palling sting
That waits on base affections. It is something
To have loved thee; and in that thought I find
My sense exalted; wretched though I be.

SOL.

Is he so wretched? Yet he is less forlorn
 Than when he sought, what I would never seek,
 A partner in his woe! I'll ne'er believe it;
 Thou art not wretched. Why, thou hast a friend,
 A sweet companion in thy grief to soothe
 Thy loneliness, and feed on thy bright smiles,
 Thrill with thine accents, with impassioned reverence
 Enclasp thine hand, and with enchained eyes
 Gaze on thy glorious presence. O, Alarcos!
 Art thou not worshipped now? What, can it be,
 That there is one, who walks in Paradise,
 Nor feels the air immortal?

ALAR.

Let my curse
 Descend upon the hour I left thy walls,
 My father's town!

SOL.

My blessing on thy curse!
 Thou hast returned—thou hast returned, Alarcos?

ALAR.

To despair—

SOL.

Yet 'tis not the hour he quitted
 Our city's wall, it is the tie that binds him
 Within those walls, my lips would more denounce—
 But ah, that tie is dear!

ALAR.

Accursed be
 The wiles that parted us; accursed be
 The ties that sever us!

SOL.

Thou'rt mine.

ALAR.

For ever—

Thou unpolluted passion of my youth,
My first, my only, my enduring love!

(They embrace.)

Enter FERDINAND the Page.

FER.

Lady, a message from thy royal father;
He comes—

SOL.

(Springing from the arms of Alarcos.)

My father! word of fear! Why now
To cloud my light? I had forgotten fate;
But he recalls it. O my bright Alarcos!
My love must fly. Nay, not one word of care;
Love only from those lips. Yet, ere we part,
Seal our sweet faith renewed.

ALAR.

And never broken.

[Exit ALARCOS.]

SOL.

Why has he gone? Why did I bid him go?
And let this jewel I so daring plucked
Slip in the waves again? I'm sure there's time
To call him back, and say farewell once more.
I'll say farewell no more; it was a word
Ever harsh music when the morrow brought
Welcomes renewed of love. No more farewells.
O when will he be mine! I cannot wait,
I cannot tarry, now I know he loves me;
Each hour, each instant that I see him not,
Is usurpation of my right. O joy!
Am I the same Solisa, that this morn
Breathed forth her orison with humbler spirit
Than the surrounding acolytes? Thou'st smiled,
Sweet Virgin, on my prayers. Twice fifty tapers
Shall burn before thy shrine. Guard over me
O! mother of my soul, and let me prosper

In my great enterprise ! O hope ! O love !
O sharp remembrance of long baffled joy !
Inspire me now.

SCENE 4.

The KING ; the INFANTA.

KING.

I see my daughter ?

SOL.

Sir, your duteous child.

KING.

Art thou indeed my child ? I had some doubt
I was a father.

SOL.

These are bitter words.

KING.

Even as thy conduct.

SOL.

Then it would appear
My conduct and my life are but the same.

KING.

I thought thou wert the Infanta of Castille,
Heir to our realm, the paragon of Spain ;
The Princess for whose smiles crowned Christendom
Sends forth its sceptred rivals. Is that bitter ?
Or bitter is it with such privilege,
And standing on life's vantage ground, to cross
A nation's hope, that on thy nice career
Has gaged its heart ?

SOL.

Have I no heart to gage ?
A sacrificial virgin, must I bind

My life to the altar, to redeem a state,
Or heal some doomed people ?

KING.

Is it so ?

Is this an office alien to thy sex ?
Or what thy youth repudiates ? We but ask
What nature sanctions.

SOL.

Nature sanctions Love ;
Your charter is more liberal. Let that pass.
I am no stranger to my duty, sir,
And read it thus. The blood that shares my sceptre
Should be august as mine. A woman loses
In love what she may gain in rank, who tops
Her husband's place : though throned, I would exchange
An equal glance. His name should be a spell
To rally soldiers. Politic he should be ;
And skilled in climes and tongues, that stranger knights
Should bruit our high Castillian courtesies.
Such chief might please a state ?

KING.

Fortunate realm !

SOL.

And shall I own less niceness than my realm ?
No ! I would have him handsome as a god ;
Hyperion in his splendour, or the mien
Of conquering Bacchus, one whose very step
Should guide a limner, and whose common words
Are caught by Troubadours to frame their songs !
And O, my father, what if this bright prince
Should have a heart as tender as his soul
Was high and peerless ? If with this same heart
He loved thy daughter ?

KING.

Close the airy page
Of thy romance ; such princes are not found
Except in lays and legends ! yet a man

Who would become a throne, I found, thee, girl;
The princely Hungary.

SOL.

A more princely fate,
Than an unwilling wife, he did deserve.

KING.

Yet wherefore didst thou pledge thy troth to him?

SOL.

And wherefore do I smile when I should sigh?
And wherefore do I feed when I would fast?
And wherefore do I dance when I should pray?
And wherefore do I live when I should die?
Canst answer that, good sir? O there are women
The world deem mad, or worse, whose life but seems
One vile caprice, a freakish thing of whims
And restless nothingness; yet if we pierce
The soul, may be we'll touch some cause profound
For what seems causeless. Early love despised,
Or baffled, which is worse; a faith betrayed,
For vanity or lucre; chill regards,
Where to gain constant glances we have paid
Some fearful forfeit: here are many springs,
Unmarked by shallow eyes, and some, or all
Of these, or none, may prompt my conduct now—
But I'll not have thy prince.

KING.

My gentle child—

SOL.

I am not gentle. I might have been once;
But gentle thoughts and I have parted long;
The cause of such partition thou shouldst know,
If memories were just.

KING.

Harp not, I pray,
On an old sorrow.

SOL.

Old! he calls it old!
The wound is green, and staunch it, or I die.

KING.

Have I the skill?

SOL.

Why! art thou not a King?
Wherein consists the magic of a crown
But in the bold achievement of a deed
Would scare a clown to dream?

KING.

I'd read thy thought.

SOL.

Then have it; I would marry.

KING.

It is well;

It is my wish.

SOL.

And unto such a prince
As I've described withal. For though a prince
Of Fancy's realm alone, as thou dost deem,
Yet doth he live indeed.

KING.

To me unknown.

SOL.

O! father mine, before thy reverend knees
Ere this we twain have knelt.

KING.

Forbear, my child;
Or can it be my daughter doth not know
He is no longer free?

SOL.

The power that bound him,
That bondage might dissolve? To holy church
Thou hast given great alms?

KING.

There's more to gain thy wish,
If more would gain it; but it cannot be,
Even were he content.

SOL.

He is content.

KING.

Hah!

SOL.

For he loves me still.

KING.

I would do much
To please thee. I'm prepared to bear the brunt
Of Hungary's ire; but do not urge, Solisa,
Beyond capacity of sufferance
My temper's proof.

SOL.

Alarcos is my husband,
Or shall the sceptre from our line depart.
Listen, ye saints of Spain, I'll have his hand,
Or by our faith, my fated womb shall be
As barren as thy love, proud King.

KING.

Thou'rt mad!

Thou'rt mad!

SOL.

Is he not mine? Thy very hand,
Did it not consecrate our vows? What claim
So sacred as my own?

KING.

He did conspire—

SOL.

'Tis false, thou know'st 'tis false—against themselves
Men do not plot—I would as soon believe

My hand could hatch a treason 'gainst my sight,
As that Alarcos would conspire to seize
A diadem I would myself have placed
Upon his brow.

KING (*taking her hand*).

Nay, calmness—Say 'tis true
He was not guilty, say perchance he was not—

SOL.

Perchance, O! vile perchance. Thou know'st full well,
Because he did reject her loose desires
And wanton overtures—

KING.

Hush, hush, O hush!

SOL.

The woman called my mother—

KING.

Spare me, spare—

SOL.

Who spared me?

Did not I kneel, and vouch his faith, and bathe
Thy hand with my quick tears, and clutch thy robe
With frantic grasp? Spare, spare indeed! In faith
Thou hast taught me to be merciful, thou hast,—
Thou and my mother!

KING.

Ah! no more, no more!

A crowned King cannot recall the past,
And yet may glad the future. She thou namest,
She was at least thy mother; but to me,
Whate'er her deeds, for truly, there were times
Some spirit did possess her, such as gleams
Now in her daughter's eye, she was a passion,
A witching form that did inflame my life
By a breath or glance. Thou art our child; the link
That binds me to my race—thou hast her place
Within my shrined heart, where thou'rt the priest

And others are unhallowed ; for, indeed,
Passion and time have so dried up my soul,
And drained its generous juices, that I own
No sympathy with man, and all his hopes
To me are mockeries.

SOL.

Ah ! I see, my father,
That thou will'st aid me !

KING.

Thou canst aid thyself.
Is there a law to let him from thy presence ?
His voice may reach thine ear ; thy gracious glance
May meet his graceful offices. Go to—
Shall Hungary frown, if his right royal spouse
Smile on the equal of her blood and state,
Her gentle cousin ?

SOL.

And is this thine aid !

KING.

What word has roughed the brow, but now confiding
In a fond father's love ?

SOL.

Alas ! what word—

What have I said—what done ? that thou should'st deem
I could do this, this, this, that is so foul,
My baffled tongue deserts me. Thou should'st know me,
Thou hast set spies on me—What ! have they told thee
I am a wanton ? I do love this man
As fits a virgin's heart—Heaven sent such thoughts
To be our solace. But to act a toy
For his loose hours, or worse, to find him one
Procured for mine, grateful for opportunities
Contrived with decency, spared skilfully
From claims more urgent ; not to dare to show
Before the world my homage ; when he's ill
To be away, and only share his gay
And lusty pillow ; to be shut out from all

That multitude of cares and charms that waits
But on companionship; and then to feel
These joys another shares, another hand
These delicate rites performs, and thou'rt remembered,
In the serener heaven of his bliss,
But as the transient flash—this is not love—
This is pollution.

KING.

Daughter, I were pleased
My cousin could a nearer claim prefer
To my regard. Ay, girl, 'twould please me well
He were my son, thy husband—but what then?
My pleasure and his conduct jar—his fate
Baulks our desire—he's married and has heirs.

SOL.

Heirs, didst thou say heirs?

KING.

What ails thee?

SOL.

Heirs, heirs?

KING.

Thou art very pale!

SOL.

The faintness of the morn
Clings to me still; I pray thee, father, grant
Thy child one easy boon.

KING.

She has to speak

But what she wills.

SOL.

Why, then, she would renounce
Her heritage—yes, place our ancient crown
On brows it may become. A veil more suits

This feminine brain ; in Huelgas' cloistered shades
I'll find oblivion.

KING.

Woe is me ! The doom
Falls on our house. I had this daughter left
To lavish all my wealth on and my might.
I've treasured for her ; for her I have slain
My thousands, conquered provinces, betrayed,
Renewed, and broken faith. She was my joy ;
She has her mother's eyes, and when she speaks
Her voice is like Brunhalda's. Cursed hour,
That a wild fancy touched her brain to cross
All my great hopes !

SOL.

My father, my dear father,
Thou call'dst me fondly, but some moments past,
Thy gentle child. I call my saint to witness
I would be such. To say I love this man
Is shallow phrasing. Since man's image first
Flung its wild shadow on my virgin soul,
It has borne no other reflex. I know well
Thou deemest he was forgotten ; this day's passion
Passed as unused confrontment, and so transient
As it was turbulent. No, no, full oft,
When thinking on him, I have been the same.
Fruitless or barren, this same form is his,
Or it is God's. My father, my dear father,
Remember he was mine, and thou didst pour
Thy blessing on our heads ! O God, O God !
When I recall the passages of love
That have ensued between me and this man,
And with thy sanction, and then just bethink
He is another's, O it makes me mad.—
Talk not to me of sceptres : can she rule
Whose mind is anarchy ? King of Castille,
Give me the heart that thou didst rob me of !
The penal hour's at hand. Thou didst destroy
My love, and I will end thy line—thy line
That is thy life.

KING.

Solisa, I will do all
A father can,—a father and a King.

SOL.

Give me Alarcos!

KING.

Hush, disturb me not;
I'm in the throes of some imaginings
A human voice might scare.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

SCENE 1.

A Street in Burgos.

Enter the COUNT OF SIDONIA and the COUNT OF LEON.

SIDO.

Is she not fair ?

LEON.

What then ? She but fulfils
Her office as a woman. For to be
A woman and not fair, is, in my creed,
To be a thing unsexed.

SIDO.

Happy Alarcos !
They say she was of Aquitaine, a daughter
Of the De Foix. I would I had been banished.

LEON.

Go and plot then. They cannot take your head,
For that is gone.

SIDO.

But banishment from Burgos
Were worse than fifty deaths. O, my good Leon,
Didst ever see, didst ever dream could be,
Such dazzling beauty ?

LEON.

Dream ! I never dream ;
Save when I've revelled over late, and then
My visions are most villanous ; but you,
You dream when you're awake.

SIDO.

Wert ever, Leon,
In pleasant Aquitaine?

LEON.

O talk of Burgos;
It is my only subject—matchless town,
Where all I ask are patriarchal years
To feel satiety like my sad friend.

SIDO.

'Tis not satiety now makes me sad;
So check thy mocking tongue, or cure my cares.

LEON.

Absence cures love. Be off to Aquitaine.

SIDO.

I chose a jester for my friend, and feel
His value now.

LEON.

You share the lover's lot
When you desire and you despair. What then?
You know right well that woman is but one,
Though she take many forms, and can confound
The young with subtle aspects. Vanity
Is her sole being. Make the myriad vows
That passionate fancy prompts. At the next tourney
Maintain her colours 'gainst the two Castilles
And Aragon to boot. You'll have her!

SIDO.

Why!

This was the way I woo'd the haughty Lara,
But I'll not hold such passages approach
The gentle lady of this morn.

LEON.

Well, then,
Try silence, only sighs and hasty glances

Withdrawn as soon as met. Could'st thou but blush,—
 But there's no hope. In time our sighs become
 A sort of plaintive hint what hopeless rogues
 Our stars have made us. Would we had but met
 Earlier, yet still we hope she'll spare a tear
 To one she met too late. Trust me she'll spare it ;
 She'll save this sinner who reveres a saint.
 Pity or admiration gains them all.
 You'll have her!

SIDO.

Well, whate'er the course pursued,
 Be thou a prophet!

Enter ORAN.

ORAN.

Stand, Senors, in God's name.

LEON.

Or the devil's.

Well, what do you want?

ORAN.

Many things, but one

Most principal.

SIDO.

And that's—

ORAN.

A friend.

LEON.

You're right

To seek one in the street, he'll prove as true
 As any that you're fostered with.

ORAN.

In brief,

I'm as you see a Moor; and I have slain
 One of our princes. Peace exists between

Our kingdom and Castille ; they track my steps.
You're young, you should be brave, generous you may be.
I shall be impaled. Save me !

LEON.

Frankly spoken.

Will you turn Christian ?

ORAN.

Show me Christian acts,
And they may prompt to Christian thoughts.

SIDO.

Although

The slain's an infidel, thou art the same.
The cause of this rash deed ?

ORAN.

I am a soldier,
And my sword's notched, sirs. This said Emir struck me,
Before the people too, in the great square
Of our chief place, Granada, and forsooth,
Because I would not yield the way at mosque.
His life has soothed my honour : if I die,
I die content ; but with your gracious aid
I would live happy.

LEON.

You love life ?

ORAN.

Most dearly.

LEON.

Sensible Moor, although he be impaled
For mobbing in a mosque. I like this fellow ;
His bearing suits my humour. He shall live
To do more murders. Come, bold infidel,
Follow to the Leon Palace ;—and, sir, prithee
Don't stab us in the back.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE 2.

Chamber in the Palace of COUNT ALARCOS. At the back of the Scene the Curtains of a large Jalousie withdrawn.

Enter COUNT ALARCOS.

ALAR.

'Tis circumstance makes conduct ; life's a ship,
The sport of every wind. And yet men tack
Against the adverse blast. How shall I steer,
Who am the pilot of Necessity ?
But whether it be fair or foul, I know not ;
Sunny or terrible. Why let her wed him ?
What care I if the pageant's weight may fall
On Hungary's ermined shoulders, if the spring
Of all her life be mine ? The tiar'd brow
Alone makes not a king. Would that my wife
Confessed a worldlier mood ! Her recluse fancy
Haunts still our castled bowers. Thou civic air
Inflame her thoughts ! Teach her to vie and revel,
Find sport in peerless robes, the pomp of feasts
And ambling of a genet— *[A serenade is heard.]*

Hah ! that voice

Should not be strange. A tribute to her charms.
'Tis music sweeter to a spouse's ear,
Than gallants dream of. Ay, she'll find adorers,
Or Burgos is right changed. *[Enter the COUNTESS.]*

Listen, child.

[Again the serenade is heard.]

COUN.

'Tis very sweet.

ALAR.

It is inspired by thee.

COUN.

Alarcos !

ALAR.

Why dost look so grave? Nay, now,
There's not a dame in Burgos would not give
Her jewels for such songs.

COUN.

Inspired by me!

ALAR.

And who so fit to fire a lover's breast?
He's clearly captive.

COUN.

O! thou knowest I love not
Such jests, Alarcos.

ALAR.

Jest! I do not jest.
I am right proud the partner of my state
Should count the chief of our Castillian knights
Among her train.

COUN.

I pray thee let me close
These blinds.

ALAR.

Poh, poh! what, baulk a serenade!
'Twould be an outrage to the courtesies
Of this great city. Faith! his voice is sweet.

COUN.

Would that he had not sung! It is a sport
In which I find no pastime.

ALAR.

Marry, come,
It gives me great delight. 'Tis well for thee,
On thy first entrance to our world, to find
So high a follower.

COUN.

Wherefore should I need
His following?

ALAR.

Nought's more excellent for woman,
 Than to be fixed on as the cynosure
 Of one whom all do gaze on. 'Tis a stamp
 Whose currency, not wealth, rank, blood, can match :
 These are raw ingots, till they are impressed
 With fashion's picture.

COUN.

Would I were once more
 Within our castle !

ALAR.

Nursery days ! The world
 Is now our home, and we must worldly be,
 Like its bold stirrers. I sup with the King.
 There is no feast, and yet to do me honour,
 Some chiefs will meet. I stand right well at Court,
 And with thine aid will stand e'en better.

COUN.

Mine !

I have no joy but in thy joy, no thought
 But for thy honour, and yet, how to aid
 Thee in these plans or hopes, indeed, Alarcos,
 Indeed, I am perplexed.

ALAR.

Art not my wife ?

Is not this Burgos ? And this pile, the palace
 Of my great fathers ? They did raise these halls
 To be the symbols of their high estate,
 The fit and haught metropolis of all
 Their force and faction. Fill them, fill them, wife ;
 With those who'll serve me well. Make this the centre
 Of all that's great in Burgos. Let it be
 The eye of the town, whereby we may perceive
 What passes in its heart : the clustering point
 Of all convergence. Here be troops of friends
 And ready instruments. Wear that sweet smile,
 That wins a partizan quicker than power ;

Speak in that tone gives each a special share
In thy regard, and what is general
Let all deem private. O! thou'lt play it rarely.

COUN.

I would do all that may become thy wife.

ALAR.

I know it, I know it. Thou art a treasure, Florimonde.
And this same singer—thou hast not asked his name.
Didst guess it? Ah! upon thy gentle cheek
I see a smile.

COUN.

My lord—indeed—

ALAR.

Thou playest
Thy game less like a novice than I deemed.
Thou canst not say thou didst not catch the voice
Of the Sidonia?

COUN.

My good lord, indeed
His voice to me is as unknown as mine
Must be to him.

ALAR.

Whose should the voice but his,
Whose stricken sight left not thy face an instant,
But gazed as if some new-born star had risen
To light his way to paradise? I tell thee,
Among my strict confederates I would count
This same young noble. He is a paramount chief;
Perchance his vassals might outnumber mine,
Conjoined we're adamant. No monarch's breath
Makes me again an exile. Florimonde,
Smile on him—smiles cost nothing; should he judge
They mean more than they say, why smile again;
And what he deems affection, registered,
Is but chaste mockery. I must to the citadel.
Sweet wife, good night. [Exit ALARCOS.]

COUN.

O! misery, misery, misery!

Must we do this? I fear there's need we must,
 For he is wise in all things, and well learned
 In this same world that to my simple sense
 Seems very fearful. Why should men rejoice,
 They can escape from the pure breath of heaven
 And the sweet franchise of their natural will,
 To such a prison-house? To be confined
 In body and in soul; to breathe the air
 Of dark close streets, and never use one's tongue
 But for some measured phrase that hath its bent
 Well gauged and chartered; to find ready smiles
 When one is sorrowful, or looks demure
 When one would laugh outright. Never to be
 Exact but when dissembling. Is this life?
 I dread this city. As I passed its gates
 My litter stumbled, and the children shrieked
 And clung unto my bosom. Pretty babes!
 I'll go to them. O! there is innocence
 Even in Burgos.

[Exit COUNTESS.]

SCENE 3.

A Chamber in the Royal Palace. The INFANTA SOLISA alone.

SOL.

I can but think my father will be just
 And see us righted. O 'tis only honest,
 The hand that did this wrong should now supply
 The sovereign remedy, and balm the wound
 Itself inflicted. He is with him now:
 Would I were there, unseen, yet seeing all!
 But ah! no cunning arras could conceal
 This throbbing heart. I've sent my little Page,
 To mingle with the minions of the Court,

And get me news. How he doth look, how eat,
What says he and what does, and all the haps
Of this same night, that yet to me may bring
A cloudless morrow. See, even now he comes.

[Enter the PAGE.]

Prithee what news? Now tell me all, my child;
When thou'rt a knight, will I not work the scarf
For thy first tourney! Prithee tell me all,

PAGE.

O lady mine, the royal Seneschal
He was so crabbed, I did scarcely deem
I could have entered.

SOL.

Cross-grained Seneschal!
He shall repent of this, my pretty Page;
But thou didst enter?

PAGE.

I did so contrive.

SOL.

Rare imp! And then?

PAGE.

Well, as you told me, then
I mingled with the Pages of the King.
They're not so very tall; I might have passed
I think for one upon a holiday.

SOL.

O thou shalt pass for better than a Page.
But tell me, child, didst see my gallant Count?

PAGE.

On the right hand—

SOL.

Upon the King's right hand?

PAGE.

Upon the King's right hand, and there were also—

SOL.

Mind not the rest ; thou'rt sure on the right hand ?

PAGE.

Most sure ; and on the left—

SOL.

Ne'er mind the left.

Speak only of the right. How did he seem ?
Did there pass words between him and the King ?
Often or scant ? Did he seem gay or grave ?
Or was his aspect of a middle tint,
As if he deemed that there were other joys
Not found within that chamber ?

PAGE.

Sooth to say,
He did seem what he is, a gallant knight.
Would I were such ! For talking with the King,
He spoke, yet not so much but he could spare
Words to the other lords. He often smiled,
Yet not so often, that a limner might
Describe his mien as jovial.

SOL.

'Tis himself !

What next ? Will they sit long ?

PAGE.

I should not like
Myself to quit such company. In truth,
The Count of Leon is a merry lord.
There were some tilting jests, I warrant you,
Between him and your knight.

SOL.

O tell it me !

PAGE.

The Count Alarcos, as I chanced to hear,
For tiptoe even would not let me see,
And that same Pedro, who is lately come

To Court, the Senor of Montilla's son,
He is so rough, and says a lady's page
Should only be where there are petticoats.

SOL.

Is he so rough? He shall be soundly whipped.
But tell me, child, the Count Alarcos—

PAGE.

Well,
The Count Alarcos—but indeed, sweet lady,
I do not wish that Pedro should be whipped.

SOL.

He shall not then be whipped—speak of the Count.

PAGE.

The Count was showing how your Saracen
Doth take your lion captive, thus and thus;
And fashioned with his scarf a dextrous noose
Made of a tiger's skin: your unicorn,
They say, is just as good.

SOL.

Well, then Sir Leon—

PAGE.

Why then your Count of Leon—but just then
Sancho, the Viscount of Toledo's son,
The King's chief Page, takes me his handkerchief
And binds it on my eyes, he whispering round
Unto his fellows, here you see I've caught
A most ferocious cub. Whereat they kicked,
And pinched, and cuffed me till I nearly roared
As fierce as any lion, you be sure.

SOL.

Rude Sancho, he shall sure be sent from Court!
My little Ferdinand—thou hast incurred
Great perils for thy mistress. Go again
And show this signet to the Seneschal,
And tell him that no greater courtesy
Be shown to any guest than to my Page.

This from myself—or I perchance will send,
 Shall school their pranks. Away, my faithful imp,
 And tell me how the Count Alarcos seems.

PAGE.

I go, sweet lady, but I humbly beg
 Sancho may not be sent from Court this time.

SOL.

Sancho shall stay.

[*Exit* PAGE.]

I hope ere long, sweet child,
 Thou too shalt be a page unto a king.
 I'm glad Alarcos smiled not overmuch;
 Your smilers please me not. I love a face
 Pensive, not sad; for where the mood is thoughtful,
 The passion is most deep and most refined.
 Gay tempers bear light hearts—are soonest gained
 And soonest lost; but he who meditates
 On his own nature, will as deeply scan
 The minds he meets, and when he loves, he casts
 His anchor deep.

[*Re-enter* PAGE.]

Give me the news.

PAGE.

The news!

I could not see the Seneschal, but gave
 Your message to the Pages. Whereupon
 Sancho, the Viscount of Toledo's son,
 Pedro, the Senor of Montilla's son,
 The young Count of Almeira, and—

SOL.

My child,

What ails thee?

PAGE.

O the Viscount of Jodar,
 I think he was the very worst of all;
 But Sancho of Toledo was the first.

SOL.

What did they ?

PAGE.

'Las, no sooner did I say
All that you told me, than he gives the word,
"A guest, a guest, a very potent guest,"
Takes me a goblet brimful of strong wine
And hands it to me, mocking, on his knee.
This I decline, when on his back they lay
Your faithful Page, nor set me on my legs
Till they had drenched me with this fiery stuff,
That I could scarcely see, or reel my way
Back to your presence.

SOL.

Marry, 'tis too much
E'en for a page's licence. Ne'er you mind,
They shall to prison by to-morrow's dawn.
I'll bind this kerchief round your brow, its scent
Will much revive you. Go, child, lie you down
On yonder couch.

PAGE.

I'm sure I ne'er can sleep
If Sancho of Toledo shall be sent
To-morrow's dawn to prison.

SOL.

Well, he's pardoned.

PAGE.

Also the Senor of Montilla's son.

SOL.

He shall be pardoned too. Now prithee sleep.

PAGE.

The young Count of Almeira —

SOL.

O ! no more,

They all are pardoned.

COUNT ALARCOS :

PAGE.

I do humbly pray
The Viscount of Jodar be pardoned too.

[Exit SOLISA.]

SCENE 4.

*A Banquet ; the KING seated ; on his right ALARCOS. SIDONIA,
LEON, the ADMIRAL OF CASTILLE, and other LORDS. Groups
of PAGES, CHAMBERLAINS, and SERVING-MEN.*

The KING.

Would'st match them, cousin, 'gainst our barbs ?

ALAR.

Against

Our barbs, Sir !

KING.

Eh, Lord Leon—you can scan
A courser's points ?

LEON.

O, Sir, your travellers
Need fleeter steeds than we poor shambling folks
Who stay at home. To my unskilful sense,
Speed for the chase and vigour for the tilt,
Meseems enough.

ALAR.

If riders be as prompt.

LEON.

Our tourney is put off, or please your Grace,
I'd try conclusions with this marvellous beast,
This Pegasus, this courser of the sun,
That is to blind us all with his bright rays
And cloud our chivalry.

KING.

My Lord Sidonia,
You're a famed judge—try me this Cyprus wine;
An English prince did give it me, returning
From the holy sepulchre.

SIDO.

Most rare, my liege,
And glitters like a gem!

KING.

It doth content
Me much, your Cyprus wine.—Lord Admiral,
Hast heard the news? The Saracens have fled
Before the Italian galleys.

THE ADMIRAL OF CASTILLE.

No one guides
A galley like your Pisan.

ALAR.

The great Doge
Of Venice, sooth, would barely veil his flag
To Pisa.

ADM.

Your Venetian hath his craft.
This Saracenic rout will surely touch
Our turbaned neighbours?

KING.

To the very core,
Granada's all a-mourning. Good, my Lords,
One goblet more. We'll give our cousin's health.
Here's to the Count Alarcos.

OMNES.

To the Count
Alarcos.

(The Guests rise, pay their homage to the KING, and are retiring.)

KING.

Good night, Lord Admiral; my Lord of Leon,

My Lord Sidonia, and my Lord of Lara,
Gentle adieus: to you, my Lord, and you,
To all and each. Cousin, good night—and yet
A moment rest awhile; since your return
I've looked on you in crowds, it may become us
To say farewell alone.

[*The KING waves his hand to the SENESCHAL—the Chamber is cleared.*]

ALAR.

Most gracious Sire,
You honour your poor servant.

KING.

Prithee, sit.
This scattering of the Saracen, methinks,
Will hold the Moor to his truce?

ALAR.

It would appear
To have that import.

KING.

Should he pass the mountains,
We can receive him.

ALAR.

Where's the crown in Spain
More prompt and more prepared?

KING.

Cousin, you're right.
We flourish. By St. James, I feel a glow
Of the heart to see you here once more, my cousin;
I'm low in the vale of years, and yet I think
I could defend my crown with such a knight
On my right hand.

ALAR.

Such liege and land would raise
Our lances high.

KING.

We carry all before us.

Leon reduced, the crescent paled in Cordova—

Why, if she gain Valencia, Aragon

Must kick the beam. And shall she gain Valencia?

It cheers my blood to find thee by my side.

Old days, old days return, when thou to me

Wert as the apple of mine eye.

ALAR.

My liege,

This is indeed most gracious.

KING.

Gentle cousin,

Thou shalt have cause to say that I am gracious.

O! I did ever love thee; and for that

Some passages occurred between us once,

That touch my memory to the quick; I would

Even pray thee to forget them—and to hold

I was most vilely practised on, my mind

Poisoned, and from a fountain, that to deem

Tainted were frenzy.

ALAR.

(Falling on his knee, and taking the KING'S hand.)

My most gracious liege,

This morn to thee I did my fealty pledge.

Believe me, Sire, I did so with clear breast,

And with no thought to thee and to thy line

But fit devotion.

KING.

O, I know it well,

I know thou art right true. Mine eyes are moist

To see thee here again.

ALAR.

It is my post,

Nor could I seek another.

KING.

Thou dost know
That Hungary leaves us?

ALAR.

I was grieved to hear
There were some crosses.

KING.

Truth, I am not grieved.
Is it such joy this fair Castillian realm,
This glowing flower of Spain, be rudely plucked
By a strange hand? To see our chambers filled
With foreign losels; our rich fiefs and abbeys
The prey of each bold scatterling, that finds
No heirship in his country? Have I lived
And laboured for this end, to swell the sails
Of alien fortunes? O my gentle cousin,
There was a time we had far other hopes!
I suffer for my deeds.

ALAR.

We must forget,
We must forget, my liege.

KING.

Is't then so easy?
Thou hast no daughter. Ah! thou canst not tell
What 'tis to feel a father's policy
Hath dimmed a child's career. A child so peerless!
Our race, though ever comely, vailed to her.
A palm tree in its pride of sunny youth
Mates not her symmetry; her step was noticed
As strangely stately by her nurse. Dost know,
I ever deemed that winning smile of hers
Mournful, with all its mirth? But ah! no more
A father gossips; nay, my weakness 'tis not.
'Tis not with all that I would prattle thus;
But you, my cousin, know Solisa well,—
And once you loved her.

ALAR (*rising*).

Once! O God!

Such passions are eternity.

KING (*advancing*).

What then,

Shall this excelling creature, on a throne
As high as her deserts, shall she become
A spoil for strangers? Have I cause to grieve
That Hungary quits us? O that I could find
Some noble of our land might dare to mix
His equal blood with our Castillian seed!
Art thou more learned in our pedigrees?
Hast thou no friend, no kinsman? Must this realm
Fall to the spoiler, and a foreign graft
Be nourished by our sap?

ALAR.

Alas! alas!

KING.

Four crowns; our paramount Castille, and Leon,
Seviglia, Cordova, the future hope
Of Murcia, and the inevitable doom
That waits the Saracen; all, all, all, all—
And with my daughter!

ALAR.

Ah! ye should have blasted
My homeward path, ye lightnings!

KING.

Such a son
Should grudge his sire no days. I would not live
To whet ambition's appetite. I'm old;
And fit for little else than hermit thoughts.
The day that gives my daughter, gives my crown:
A cell's my home.

ALAR.

O, life I will not curse thee!
Let bald and shaven crowns denounce thee vain;

To me thou wert no shade ! I loved thy stir
 And panting struggle. Power, and pomp, and beauty,
 Cities and courts, the palace and the fane,
 The chace, the revel, and the battle-field,
 Man's fiery glance, and woman's thrilling smile,
 I loved ye all : I curse not thee, O life !
 But on my stars confusion. May they fall
 From out their spheres, and blast our earth no more
 With their malignant rays, that mocking placed
 All the delights of life within my reach,
 And chained me from fruition.

KING.

Gentle cousin,
 Thou art disturbed ; I fear these words of mine,
 Chance words ere I did say to thee good night—
 For O, 'twas joy to see thee here again,
 Who art my kinsman—and my only one—
 Have touched on some old cares for both of us.
 And yet the world hath many charms for thee ;
 Thou'rt not like us, and that unhappy child
 The world esteems so favoured.

ALAR.

Ah, the world
 Ill estimates the truth of any lot.
 Their speculation is too far and reaches
 Only externals—they are ever fair.
 There are vile cankers in your gaudiest flowers,
 But you must pluck and peer within the leaves
 To catch the pest.

KING.

Alas ! my gentle cousin,
 To hear thou hast thy sorrows too, like us,
 It pains me much, and yet I'll not believe it ;
 For with so fair a wife——

ALAR.

Torture me not,
 Although thou art a King.

KING.

My gentle cousin,
I spoke to solace thee. We all do hear
Thou art most favoured in a right fair wife,
We do desire to see her; can she find
A friend becomes her better than our child?

ALAR

My wife? would she were not!

KING.

I say so too,
Would she were not!

ALAR.

Ah me! why did I marry?

KING.

Truth, it was very rash.

ALAR.

Who made me rash?

Who drove me from my hearth, and sent me forth
On the unkindred earth? With that dark spleen
Goading injustice, that 'tis vain to quell,
Entails on restless spirits. Yes, I married,
As men do oft, from very wantonness;
To tamper with a destiny that's cross,
To spite my fate, to put the seal upon
A balked career, in high and proud defiance
Of hopes that yet might mock me, to beat down
False expectation and its damned lures,
And fix a bar betwixt me and defeat.

KING.

These bitter words would rob me of my hope,
That thou at least wert happy.

ALAR.

Would I slept
With my grey fathers!

KING.

And my daughter too!

O most unhappy pair!

ALAR.

There is a way
To cure such woes, one only.

KING.

'Tis my thought.

ALAR.

No cloister shall entomb this life; the grave
Shall be my refuge.

KING.

Yet to die were witless,
When Death, who with his fatal finger taps
At princely doors, as freely as he gives
His summons to the serf, may at this instant
Have sealed the only life that throws a shade
Between us and the sun.

ALAR.

She's very young.

KING.

And may live long, as I do hope she will;
Yet have I known as blooming as she die,
And that most suddenly. The air of cities
To unaccustomed lungs is very fatal;
Perchance the absence of her accustomed sports,
The presence of strange faces, and a longing
For those she has been bred among—I've known
This most pernicious—she might droop and pine—
And when they fail, they sink most rapidly.
God grant she may not; yet I do remind thee
Of this wild chance, when speaking of thy lot.
In truth 'tis sharp, and yet I would not die
When Time, the great enchanter, may change all,
By bringing somewhat earlier to thy gate
A doom that must arrive.

ALAR.

Would it were there!

KING.

'Twould be the day thy hand should clasp my daughter's,
That thou hast loved so long; 'twould be the day
My crown, the crown of all my realms, Alarcos,
Should bind thy royal brow. Is this the morn
Breaks in our chamber? Why, I did but mean
To say good night unto my gentle cousin
So long unseen—O, we have gossipped, coz,
So cheering, dreams!

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

SCENE 1.

Interior of the Cathedral of Burgos. The High Altar Illuminated; in the distance, various Chapels lighted, and in each of which Mass is celebrating: in all directions groups of kneeling Worshippers. Before the High Altar the Prior of Burgos officiates, attended by his Sacerdotal Retinue. In the front of the Stage, opposite to the Audience, a Confessional.

The chaunting of a solemn Mass here commences; as it ceases,

Enter ALARCOS.

ALAR.

Would it were done! and yet I dare not say
It should be done. O, that some natural cause,
Or superhuman agent, would step in,
And save me from its practice! Will no pest
Descend upon her blood? Must thousands die
Daily, and her charmed life be spared? As young
Are hourly plucked from out their hearths. A life!
Why, what's a life? A loan that must return
To a capricious creditor; recalled
Often as soon as lent. I'd wager mine
'To-morrow like the dice, were my blood pricked.
Yet now—

When all that endows life with all its price,
Hangs on some flickering breath I could puff out,
I stand agape. I'll dream 'tis done: what then?
Mercy remains? For ever, not for ever
I charge my soul? Will no contrition ransom,
Or expiatory torments compensate
The awful penalty? Ye kneeling worshippers,
That gaze in silent ecstasy before

Yon flaming altar, you come here to bow
Before a God of mercy. Is't not so ?

[ALARCOS walks towards the High Altar and kneels.

A Procession advances from the back of the Scene, singing a solemn Mass, and preceding the Prior of Burgos, who seats himself in the Confessional, his Train filing off on each side of the Scene: the lights of the High Altar are extinguished, but the Chapels remain illuminated.

THE PRIOR.

Within this chair I sit, and hold the keys
That open realms no conqueror can subdue,
And where the monarchs of the earth must fain
Solicit to be subjects : Heaven and Hades,
Lands of Immortal light and shores of gloom,
Eternal as the chorus of their wail,
And the dim isthmus of that middle space,
Where the compassionate soul may purge its sins
In pious expiation. Then advance
Ye children of all sorrows, and all sins,
Doubts that perplex, and hopes that tantalize,
All the wild forms the fiend Temptation takes
To tamper with the soul ! Come with the care
That eats your daily life ; come with the thought
That is conceived in the noon of night,
And makes us stare around us though alone ;
Come with the engendering sin, and with the crime
That is full-born. To counsel and to soothe,
I sit within this chair.

[ALARCOS advances and kneels by the Confessional.

ALAR.

O, holy father !
My soul is burthened with a crime.

PRIOR.

My son,
The church awaits thy sin.

ALAR.

It is a sin

Most black and terrible. Prepare thine ear
For what must make it tremble.

PRIOR.

Thou dost speak
To Power above all passion, not to man.

ALAR.

There was a lady, father, whom I loved,
And with a holy love, and she loved me
As holily. Our vows were blessed, if favour
Hang on a father's benediction.

PRIOR.

Her

Mother ?

ALAR.

She had a mother, if to bear
Children be all that makes a mother : one
Who looked on me, about to be her child,
With eyes of lust.

PRIOR.

And thou ?

ALAR.

O, if to trace

But with the memory's too veracious aid
This tale be anguish, what must be its life
And terrible action ? Father, I abjured
This lewd she-wolf. But ah ! her fatal vengeance
Struck to my heart. A banished scatterling
I wandered on the earth.

PRIOR.

Thou didst return ?

ALAR.

And found the being that I loved, and found
Her faithful still.

PRIOR.

And thou, my son, wert happy ?

ALAR.

Alas! I was no longer free. Strange ties
 Had bound a hopeless exile. But she I had loved,
 And never ceased to love, for in the form,
 Not in the spirit was her faith more pure,
 She looked upon me with a glance that told
 Her death but in my love. I struggled, nay,
 'Twas not a struggle, 'twas an agony.
 Her aged sire, her dark impending doom,
 And the o'erwhelming passion of my soul—
 My wife died suddenly.

PRIOR.

And by a life
 That should have shielded hers?

ALAR.

Is there hope of mercy?
 Can prayers, can penances, can they avail?
 What consecration of my wealth, for I'm rich,
 Can aid me? Can it aid me? Can endowments—
 Nay, set no bounds to thy unlimited schemes
 Of saving charity. Can shrines, can chauntries,
 Monastic piles, can they avail? What if
 I raise a temple not less proud than this,
 Enriched with all my wealth, with all, with all?
 Will endless masses, will eternal prayers,
 Redeem me from perdition?

PRIOR.

What, would gold
 Redeem the sin it prompted?

ALAR.

No, by Heaven!
 No, Fate had dowered me with wealth might feed
 All but a royal hunger.

PRIOR.

And alone
 Thy fatal passion urged thee?

ALAR.

Hah !

PRIOR.

Probe deep

Thy wounded soul.

ALAR.

'Tis torture : fathomless
I feel the fell incision.

PRIOR.

There's a lure
Thou dost not own, and yet its awful shade
Lowers in the back-ground of thy soul—thy tongue
Trifles the church's ear. Beware, my son,
And tamper not with Paradise.

ALAR.

A breath,
A shadow, essence subtler far than love,
And yet I loved her, and for love had dared
All that I ventured for this twin-born lure
Cradled with love, for which I soiled my soul.
O, father, it was Power.

PRIOR.

And this dominion
Purchased by thy soul's mortgage, still is't thine ?

ALAR.

Yea, thousands bow to him, who bows to thee.

PRIOR.

Thine is a fearful deed.

ALAR.

O, is there mercy ?

PRIOR.

Say, is there penitence ?

ALAR.

How shall I gauge it ?

What temper of contrition might the church
Require from such a sinner ?

PRIOR.

Is't thy wish,
Nay, search the very caverns of thy thought,
Is it thy wish this deed were now undone ?

ALAR.

Undone, undone ! It is—O, say it were,
And what am I ? O, father, wer't not done,
I should not be less tortured than I'm now ;
My life less like a dream of haunting thoughts
Tempting to unknown enormities. The sun
Would rise as beamless on my darkened days,
Night proffer the same torments. Food would fly
My lips the same, and the same restless blood
Quicken my harassed limbs. Undone ! undone !
I have no metaphysic faculty
To deem this deed undone.

PRIOR.

Thou must repent
This terrible deed. Look through thy heart. Thy wife,
There was a time thou lov'dst her ?

ALAR.

I'll not think
There was a time.

PRIOR.

And was she fair ?

ALAR.

A form
Dazzling all eyes but mine.

PRIOR.

And pure ?

ALAR.

No saint
More chaste than she. Her consecrated shape

She kept as 'twere a shrine, and just as full
Of holy thoughts ; her very breath was incense,
And all her gestures sacred as the forms
Of priestly offices !

PRIOR.

I'll save thy soul.
Thou must repent that one so fair and pure,
And loving thee so well——

ALAR.

Father, in vain.
There is a bar betwixt me and repentance.
And yet——

PRIOR.

Ay, yet——

ALAR.

The day may come, I'll kneel
In such a mood, and might there then be hope ?

PRIOR.

We hold the keys that bind and loosen all :
But penitence alone is mercy's portal,
The obdurate soul is doomed. Remorseful tears
Are sinners' sole ablution. O, my son,
Bethink thee yet, to die in sin like thine ;
Eternal masses profit not thy soul,
Thy consecrated wealth will but upraise
The monument of thy despair. Once more,
Ere yet the vesper lights shall fade away,
I do adjure thee, on the church's bosom
Pour forth thy contrite heart.

ALAR.

A contrite heart !
A stainless hand would count for more. I see
No drops on mine. My head is weak, my heart
A wilderness of passion. Prayers, thy prayers !

[ALARCOS rises suddenly, and exit.]

SCENE 2.

Chamber in the Royal Palace.

The INFANTA seated in despondency ; the KING standing by her side.

KING.

Indeed, 'tis noticed.

SOL.

Solitude is all
I ask ; and is it then so great a boon ?

KING.

Nay, solitude's no princely appanage.
Our state's a pedestal, which men have raised
That they may gaze on greatness.

SOL.

A false idol,
And weaker than its worshippers. I've lived
To feel my station's vanity. O, Death,
Thou endest all !

KING.

Thou art too young to die,
And yet may be too happy. Moody youth
Toys in its talk with the dark thought of death,
As if to die were but to change a robe.
It is their present refuge for all cares
And each disaster. When the sere has touched
Their flowing locks, they prattle less of death,
Perchance think more of it.

SOL.

Why, what is greatness ?
Will't give me love, or faith, or tranquil thoughts ?
No, no, not even justice.

KING.

'Tis thyself

That does thyself injustice. Let the world
Have other speculation than the breach
Of our unfilled vows. They bear too near
And fine affinity to what we would,
Ay, what we will. I would not choose this moment,
Men brood too curiously upon the cause
Of the late rupture, for the cause detected
May bar the consequence.

SOL.

A day, an hour
Sufficed to crush me. Weeks and weeks pass on
Since I was promised right.

KING.

Take thou my sceptre
And do thyself this right. Is't, then, so easy ?

SOL.

Let him who did the wrong, contrive the means
Of his atonement.

KING.

All a father can,
I have performed.

SOL.

Ah ! then there is no hope.
The Bishop of Ossuna, you did say
He was the learnedest clerk in Christendom,
And you would speak to him ?

KING.

What says Alarcos ?

SOL.

I spoke not to him since I first received
His princely pledge.

KING.

Call on him to fulfil it.

SOL.

Can he do more than kings ?

KING.

Yes, he alone ;
Alone it rests with him. This learn from me.
There is no other let.

SOL.

I learn from thee
What other lips should tell me.

KING.

Girl, art sure
Of this same lover ?

SOL.

O ! I'll never doubt him.

KING.

And yet may be deceived.

SOL.

He is as true
As talismanic steel.

KING.

Why, then thou art,
At least thou should'st be, happy. Smile, Solisa ;
For since the Count is true, there is no bar.
Why dost not smile ?

SOL.

I marvel that Alarcos
Hath been so mute on this.

KING.

But thou art sure
He is most true.

SOL.

Why should I deem him true ?
Have I found truth in any ? Woe is me,
I feel as one quite doomed. I know not why
I ever was ill-omened.

KING.

Listen, girl ;

Probe this same lover to the core—'t may be,
 I think he is, most true ; he should be so
 If there be faith in vows, and men ne'er break
 The pledge it profits them to keep. And yet—

SOL.

And what ?

KING.

To be his sovereign's cherished friend,
 And smiled on by the daughter of his King,
 Why that might profit him, and please so much,
 His wife's ill humour might be borne withal.

SOL.

You think him false ?

KING.

I think he might be true :
 But when a man's well placed, he loves not change.

(Enter at the back of the Scene COUNT ALARCOS disguised. He advances, dropping his Hat and Cloak.)

Ah, gentle cousin, all our thoughts were thine.

ALAR.

I marvel men should think. Lady, I'll hope
 Thy thoughts are like thyself—most fair.

KING.

Her thoughts

Are like her fortunes, lofty, but around
 The peaks cling vapours.

ALAR.

Eagles live in clouds,
 And they draw royal breath.

KING.

I'd have her quit
 This strange seclusion, cousin. Give thine aid
 To festive purposes.

ALAR.

A root, an egg,
Why there's a feast with a holy mind.

KING.

If ever
I find my seat within a hermitage,
I'll think the same.

ALAR.

You have built shrines, sweet lady ?

SOL.

What then, my lord ?

ALAR.

Why then you might be worshipped,
If your image were in front—I'd bow down
To anything so fair.

KING.

Dost know, my cousin,
Who waits me now ? The deputies from Murcia.
The realm is ours—(*whispers him*) is thine.

ALAR.

The church has realms
Wider than both Castilles. But which of them
Will be our lot ; that's it.

KING.

Mine own Solisa,
They wait me in my cabinet—(*aside to her*)
Bethink thee
With whom all rests.

[*Exit the KING.*]

SOL.

You had sport to-day, my lord ?
The King was at the chace.

ALAR.

I breathed my barb.

SOL.

They say the chace hath charm to cheer the spirit.

ALAR.

'Tis better than prayers,

SOL.

Indeed, I think I'll hunt,
You and my father seem so passing gay.

ALAR.

Why this is no confessional, no shrine
Haunted with presaged gloom. I should be gay
To look at thee and listen to thy voice ;
For if fair pictures and sweet sounds enchant
The soul of man, that are but artifice,
How then am I entranced, this living picture
Bright by my side, and listening to this music
That nature gave thee. What's eternal life
To this inspired mortality ! Let priests
And pontiffs thunder, still I feel that here
Is all my joy.

SOL.

Ah ! why not say thy woe ?
Who stands between thee and thy rights but me ?
Who stands between thee and thine ease but me ?
Who bars thy progress, brings thee cares, but me ?
Lures thee to impossible contracts, goads thy faith
To mad performance, welcomes thee with sighs,
And parts from thee with tears ? Is this joy ?—No !
I am thine evil genius.

ALAR.

Say my star
Of inspiration. This reality
Baffles their mystic threats. Who talks of cares ?
Why, what's a Prince, if his imperial will
Be bitted by a priest ! There's nought impossible.
Thy sighs are sighs of love, and all thy tears
But affluent tenderness.

SOL.

You sing as sweet
As did the syrens—is it from the heart,
Or from the lips, that voice ?

ALAR.

Solisa !

SOL.

Ay !

My ear can catch a treacherous tone ; 'tis trained
To perfidy. My Lord Alarcos, look me
Straight in the face. He quails not.

ALAR.

O my soul,

Is this the being for whose love I've pledged
Even thy forfeit !

SOL.

Alarcos, dear Alarcos,
Look not so stern ! I'm mad, yes, yes, my life
Upon thy truth—I know thou'rt true ; he said
It rested but with thee—I said it not,
Nor thought it.

ALAR.

Lady !

SOL.

Not that voice !—

ALAR.

I'll know

Thy thought—the King hath spoken ?

SOL.

Words of joy

And madness. With thyself alone he says
It rests.

ALAR.

Nor said he more ?

SOL.

It had found me deaf,
For he touched hearings quick.

ALAR.

Thy faith in m
Hath gone.

SOL.

I'll doubt our shrined miracles
Before I doubt Alarcos.

ALAR.

He'll believe thee,
For at this moment he has much to endure,
And that he could not.

SOL.

And yet I must choose
This time to vex thee. O, I am the curse
And blight of the existence, which to bless
Is all my thought ! Alarcos, dear Alarcos,
I pray thee pardon me. I am so wretched :
This fell suspense is like a frightful dream
Wherein we fall from heights, yet never reach
The bottomless abyss. It wastes my spirit,
Wears down my life, gnaws ever at my heart,
Makes my brain quick when others are asleep,
And dull when theirs is active. O, Alarcos,
I could lie down and die.

ALAR.

(Advancing in soliloquy.)

Asleep, awake,
In dreams, and in the musing moods that wait
On unfulfilled purposes, I've done it ;
And thought upon it afterwards, nor shrunk
From the fell retrospect.

SOL.

He's wrapped in thought ;
Indeed his glance was wild when first he entered,
And his speech lacked completeness.

ALAR.

How is it then,
The body that should be the viler part,
And made for servile uses, should rebel
'Gainst the mind's mandate, and should hold its aid
Aloof from our adventure? Why the sin
Is in the thought, not in the deed; 'tis not
The body pays the penalty, the soul
Must clear that awful scot. What palls my arm?
It is not pity; trumpet-tongued ambition
Stifles her plaintive voice; it is not love,
For that inspires the blow! Art thou Solisa?

SOL.

I am that luckless maiden whom you love.

ALAR.

You could lie down and die. Who speaks of death?
There is no absolution for self-murder.
Why 'tis the greater sin of the two. There is
More peril in't. What, sleep upon your post
Because you are wearied? No, we must spy on
And watch occasions. Even now they are ripe.
I feel a turbulent throbbing at my heart
Will end in action: for these spiritual tumults
Herald great deeds.

SOL.

It is the church's scheme
Ever to lengthen suits.

ALAR.

The church?

SOL.

Ossuna

Leans much to Rome.

ALAR.

And how concerns us that

SOL.

His Grace spoke to the Bishop—you must know?

ALAR.

Ah, yes! his Grace—the church, it is our friend.
And truly should be so. It gave our griefs
And it should bear their balm.

SOL.

Hast pardoned me
That I was querulous? But lovers crossed
Wrangle with those that love them, as it were,
To spite affection.

ALAR.

We are bound together
As the twin powers of the storm. Very love
Now makes me callous. The great bond is sealed:
Look bright; if gloomy, mortgage future bliss
For present comfort. Trust me 'tis good 'surance.
I'll to the King.

[*Exeunt both.*]

SCENE 3.

*A Street in Burgos.**Enter the COUNT OF LEON followed by ORAN.*

LEON.

He has been sighing like a Sybarite
These six weeks past, and now he sends to me
To hire my bravo. Well, that smacks of manhood.
He'll pierce at least one heart, if not the right one.
Murder and marriage! which the greater crime
A schoolman may decide. All arts exhausted,
His death alone remains. A clumsy course.
I care not. Truth, I hate this same Alarcos;
I think it is the colour of his eyes,
But I do hate him; and the royal ear
Lists coldly to me since this same return.
The King leans wholly on him. Sirrah Moor,
All is prepared?

ORAN.

And prompt.

LEON.

'Tis well; no boggling,
Let it be cleanly done.

ORAN.

A stab or two,
And the Arlanzon's wave shall know the rest.

LEON.

I'll have to kibe his heels at Court, if you fail.

ORAN.

There is no fear. We have the choicest spirits
In Burgos.

LEON.

Goodly gentlemen! you wait
Their presence?

ORAN.

Here anon.

LEON.

Good night, dusk infidel,
They'll take me for an Alguazil. At home
Your news will reach me.

[Exit LEON.]

ORAN.

And were all your throats cut,
I would not weep. O, Allah, let them spend
Their blood upon themselves! My life he shielded,
And now exacts one at my hands; we're quits
When this is closed. That thought will grace a deed
Otherwise graceless. I would break the chain
That binds me to this man. His callous eye
Repels devotion, while his reckless vein
Demands prompt sacrifice. Now is't wise this?
Methinks 'twere wise to touch the humblest heart
Of those that serve us? In maturest plans

There lacks that finish, which alone can flow
From zealous instruments. But here are some
That have no hearts to touch.

(Enter Four BRAVOS.)

How now, good senors,—
I cannot call them comrades; you're exact,
As doubtless ye are brave. You know your duty?

1ST BRAVO.

And will perform it, or my name is changed;
And I'm not Guzman Jaca.

ORAN.

You well know
The arm you cross is potent?

2ND BRAVO.

All the steel
Of Calatrava's knights shall not protect it.

3RD BRAVO.

And all the knights to boot.

4TH BRAVO.

A river business.

ORAN.

The safest sepulchre.

4TH BRAVO.

A burial ground
Of which we are the priests, and take our fees;
I never cross a stream, but I do feel
A sense of property.

ORAN.

You know the signal:
And when I boast I've friends, they may appear
To prove I am no braggart.

1ST BRAVO.

To our posts.
It shall be cleanly done, and brief.

2ND BRAVO.

No oaths,

No swagger.

3RD BRAVO.

Not a word ; but all as pleasant
As we were nobles like himself.

4TH BRAVO.

'Tis true, sir ;

You deal with gentlemen.

[*Exeunt* BRAVOS.]*Enter* COUNT ALARCOS.

ALAR.

The moon's a sluggard,
I think, to-night. How now, the Moor that dodged
My steps at vespers. Hem ! I like not this.
Friends beneath cloaks ; they're wanted. Save you, sir ?

ORAN.

And you, sir ?

ALAR.

Not the first time we have met,
Or I've no eye for lurkers.

ORAN.

I have tasted
Our common heritage, the air, to-day ;
And if the selfsame beam warmed both our bloods,
What then ?

ALAR.

Why nothing ; but the sun has set,
And honest men should seek their hearths.

ORAN.

I wait

My friends.

(The BRAVOS rush in, and assault COUNT ALARCOS, who,

dropping his Cloak, shows his Sword already drawn, and keeps them at bay.)

ALAR.

So, so! who plays with prince's blood?
No sport for varlets. Thus and thus, I'll teach ye
To know your station.

1ST BRAVO.

Ah!

2ND BRAVO.

Away!

3RD BRAVO.

Fly, fly!

4TH BRAVO.

No place for quiet men.

[The BRAVOS run off.]

ALAR.

A little breath
Is all they have cost me, tho' their blood has stained
My damask blade. And still the Moor! What ho!
Why fliest not like thy mates?

ORAN.

Because I wait
To fight.

ALAR.

Rash caitiff! knowest thou who I am?

ORAN.

One whom I heard was brave, and now has proved it.

ALAR.

Am I thy foe?

ORAN.

No more than all thy race.

ALAR.

Go, save thy life.

ORAN.

Look to thine own, proud lord.

ALAR.

Perdition catch thy base-born insolence.

(They fight; after a long and severe encounter, ALARCOS disarms ORAN, who falls wounded.)

ORAN.

Be brief, dispatch me.

ALAR.

Not a word for mercy?

ORAN.

Why should'st thou give it?

ALAR.

'Tis not merited,
Yet might be gained. Who set thee on to this?
My sword is at thy throat. Give me his name,
And thine shall live.

ORAN.

I cannot.

ALAR.

What, is life
So light a boon? It hangs upon this point.
Bold Moor, is't then thy love to him who fees thee,
Makes thee so faithful?

ORAN.

No; I hate him.

ALAR.

What

Restrains thee, then?

ORAN.

The feeling that restrained
My arm from joining stabbers—Honour.

ALAR.

Humph !

An overseer of stabbers for some ducats.
And is that honour ?

ORAN.

Once he screened my life,
And this was my return.

ALAR.

What if I spare
Thy life even now ? Wilt thou accord to me
The same devotion ?

ORAN.

Yea ; the life thou givest
Thou should'st command.

ALAR.

If I too have a foe
Crossing my path and blighting all my life ?

ORAN.

This sword should strive to reach him.

ALAR.

Him ! thy bond
Shall know no sex or nation. Limitless
Shall be thy pledge. I'll claim from thee a life
For that I spare. How now, wilt live ?

ORAN.

To pay
A life for that now spared.

ALAR.

Swear to thy truth ;
Swear by Mahound, and swear by all thy gods,
If thou hast any ; swear it by the stars,
In which we all believe ; and by thy hopes

Of thy false paradise ; swear it by thy soul,
And by thy sword !

ORAN.

I swear.

ALAR.

Arise and live.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

A C T I V.

SCENE 1.

Interior of a Posada frequented by BRAVOS, in an obscure quarter of Burgos. FLIX at the fire, frying eggs. Men seated at small tables drinking; others lying on benches. At the side, but in the front of the Scene, some Beggars squatted on the ground, thrumming a Mandolin; a Gipsy Girl dancing.

A BRAVO.

Come, mother, dost take us for Saracens? I say we are true Christians, and so must drink wine.

ANOTHER BRAVO.

Mother Flix is sour to-night. Keep the evil eye from the olla !

A 3RD BRAVO (*advancing to her*).

Thou beauty of Burgos, what are dimples unless seen? Smile! wench.

FLIX.

A frying egg will not wait for the King of Cordova.

1ST BRAVO.

Will have her way. Graus knows a pretty wife's worth. A handsome hostess is bad for the guest's purse.

A BRAVO (*rising*).

Good companions make good company. Graus, Graus! another flagon.

ANOTHER BRAVO.

Of the right Catalan.

3RD BRAVO.

Nay, for my omelette.

FLIX.

Hungry men think the cook lazy.

Enter GRAUS with a Flagon of Wine.

1ST BRAVO.

'Tis mine.

2ND BRAVO.

No, mine.

1ST BRAVO.

We'll share.

2ND BRAVO.

No, each man his own beaker ; he who shares has the worst half.

3RD BRAVO (*to FLIX, who brings the Omelette*).

An egg and to bed.

GRAUS.

Who drinks, first chinks.

1ST BRAVO.

The debtor is stoned every day. There will be water-work to-morrow, and that will wash it out. You know me ?

GRAUS.

In a long journey and a small inn, one knows one's company.

2ND BRAVO.

Come, I'll give, but I won't share. Fill up.

GRAUS.

That's liberal ; my way ; full measure but prompt pezos ; I loathe your niggards.

1ST BRAVO.

As the little tailor of Campillo said, who worked for nothing, and found thread.

(To the other BRAVO.)

Nay, I'll not refuse ; we know each other.

2ND BRAVO.

We've seen the stars together

AN OLD MAN.

Burgos is not what it was.

A 5TH BRAVO (*waking*).

Sleep ends and supper begins. The olla—the olla—Mother Flix, (*shaking a purse*,) there's the dinner bell.

2ND BRAVO.

That will bring courses.

1ST BRAVO.

An ass covered with gold has more respect than a horse with a pack-saddle.

5TH BRAVO.

How for that ass ?

2ND BRAVO.

Nay, the sheep should have his belly full who quarrels with his mate.

5TH BRAVO.

But how for that ass ?

A FRIAR (*advancing*).

Peace be with ye, brethren ! A meal in God's name.

5TH BRAVO.

Who asks in God's name, asks for two. But how for that ass ?

FLIX (*bringing the olla*).

Nay, an ye must brawl, go fight the Moors. 'Tis a peaceable house, and we sleep quiet o' nights.

5TH BRAVO.

Am I an ass ?

FLIX.

He is an ass who talks when he might eat.

5TH BRAVO.

A Secadon sausage ! Come, mother, I'm all peace—thou'rt a rare hand. Ass in thy teeth, comrade, and no more on't.

1ST BRAVO.

When I will not, two cannot quarrel.

OLD MAN.

Everything is changed for the worse.

FRIAR.

For the love of St. Jago, senors ; for the love of St. Jago !

5TH BRAVO.

When it pleases not God, the saint can do little.

2ND BRAVO.

Nay, supper for all, and drink's the best meat. Some have sung for it, some danced. There is no fishing for trout in dry breeches. You shall preach.

FRIAR.

Benedicite, brethren—

1ST BRAVO.

Nay, no Latin, for the devil's not here.

2ND BRAVO.

And prithee let it be as full of meat as an egg ; for we, who do many deeds, love not many words.

FRIAR.

Thou shalt not steal.

1ST BRAVO.

He blasphemes.

FRIAR.

But what is theft ?

2ND BRAVO.

Ay ! there it is.

FRIAR.

The tailor he steals the cloth, and the miller he steals the meal ; is either a thief ? 'tis the way of trade. But what if our trade be to steal ? Why then our work is to cut purses ; to cut purses is to follow our business ; and to follow our business is to obey the King ; and so thieving is no theft. And that's probatum, and so, amen.

5TH BRAVO.

Shall put thy spoon in the olla for that.

2ND BRAVO.

And drink this health to our honest fraternity.

OLD MAN.

I have heard sermons by the hour; this is brief; everything falls off.

Enter a PERSONAGE masked and cloaked.

1ST BRAVO (*to his Companions*).

See'st yon mask?

2ND BRAVO.

'Tis strange.

GRAUS (*to FLIX*).

Who is this?

FLIX.

The fool wonders, the wise man asks. Must have no masks here.

GRAUS.

An obedient wife commands her husband. Business with a stranger, title enough. (*Advancing and addressing the Mask.*) Most noble Senor Mask.

THE UNKNOWN.

Well, fellow!

GRAUS.

Hem; as it may be. D'ye see, most noble Senor Mask, that 'tis an orderly house this, frequented by certain honest gentlemen, that take their siesta, and eat a fried egg after their day's work, and so are not ashamed to show their faces. Ahem!

THE UNKNOWN.

As in truth I am in such villanous company.

GRAUS.

Wheugh! but 'tis not the first ill word that brings a blow.

Would'st sup indifferently well here at a moderate rate, we are thy servants. My Flix hath reputation at the frying-pan, and my wine hath made lips smack; but here, senor, faces must be uncovered.

THE UNKNOWN.

Poh! poh!

GRAUS.

Nay, then, I will send some to you shall gain softer words.

1ST BRAVO.

Why, what's this?

2ND BRAVO.

Our host is an honest man, and has friends.

5TH BRAVO.

Let me finish my olla, and I will discourse with him.

THE UNKNOWN.

Courage is fire, and bullying is smoke. I come here on business, and with you all.

1ST BRAVO.

Carraho! and who's this?

THE UNKNOWN.

One who knows you, though you know not him. One whom you have never seen, yet all fear. And who walks at night, and where he likes.

2ND BRAVO.

The devil himself!

THE UNKNOWN.

It may be so.

2ND BRAVO.

Sit by me, Friar, and speak Latin.

THE UNKNOWN.

There is a man missing in Burgos, and I will know where he is.

OLD MAN.

There were many men missing in my time.

THE UNKNOWN.

Dead or alive, I care not—but land or water, river or turf, I will know where the body is stowed. See (*shaking a purse*) here is eno' to point all the poniards of the city. You shall have it to drink his health.

A BRAVO.

How call you him?

THE UNKNOWN.

Oran, the Moor.

1ST BRAVO.

(*Jumping from his seat and approaching the Stranger.*)

My name is Guzman Jaca; my hand was in that business.

THE UNKNOWN.

With the Moor and three of your comrades?

1ST BRAVO.

The same.

THE UNKNOWN.

And how came your quarry to fly next day?

1ST BRAVO.

Very true; 'twas a bad business for all of us. I fought like a lion; see, my arm is still bound up: but he had advice of our visit; and no sooner had we saluted him, than there suddenly appeared a goodly company of twelve serving-men, or say twelve to fifteen——

THE UNKNOWN.

You lie; he walked alone.

1ST BRAVO.

Very true; and if I am forced to speak the whole truth, it was thus. I fought like a lion; see, my arm is still bound up; but I was not quite his match alone, for I had let blood the day before, and my comrades were taken with a panic, and so left me in the lurch. And now you have it all.

THE UNKNOWN.

And Oran?

1ST BRAVO.

He fled at once.

THE UNKNOWN.

Come, come, Oran did not fly.

1ST BRAVO.

Very true. We left him alone with the Count. And now you have it all.

THE UNKNOWN.

Had he slain him, the body would have been found.

1ST BRAVO.

Very true. That's the difference between us professional performers, and you mere amateurs; we never leave the bodies.

THE UNKNOWN.

And you can tell me nothing of him?

1ST BRAVO.

No, but I engage to finish the Count any night you like now, for I have found out his lure.

THE UNKNOWN.

How's that?

1ST BRAVO.

Every evening, about an hour after sunset, he enters by a private way the citadel.

THE UNKNOWN.

Hah! what more?

1ST BRAVO.

He is stagged; there is a game playing, but what I know not.

THE UNKNOWN.

Your name is Guzman Jaca?

1ST BRAVO.

The same.

COUNT ALARCOS :

THE UNKNOWN.

Honest fellow ! there's gold for you. You know nothing of Oran ?

1ST BRAVO.

Maybe he has crawled to some place wounded.

THE UNKNOWN.

To die like a bird. Look after him. If I wish more, I know where to find you. What ho, Master Host ! I cannot wait to try your mistress's art to-night ; but here's my scot for our next supper.

[Exit the UNKNOWN.]

[SCENE 2.]

A Chamber in the Palace of Alarcos.

The COUNTESS and SIDONIA.

SIDO.

Lady, you're moved : nay, 'twas an idle word.

COUN.

But was it true ?

SIDO.

And yet might little mean.

COUN.

That I should live to doubt !

SIDO.

But do not doubt ;

Forget it, lady. You should know him well ;

Nay, do not credit it.

COUN.

He's very changed.

I would not own, no, not believe that change.

I've given it every gloss that might confirm

My sinking heart. Time and your tale agree—
Alas ! 'tis true.

SIDO.

I hope not ; still believe
It is not true. Would that I had not spoken !
It was unguarded prate.

COUN.

You have done me service :
Condemned, the headsman is no enemy,
But closes suffering.

SIDO.

Yet a bitter doom
To torture those you'd bless. I have a thought.
What if this eve you visit this same spot,
That shrouds these meetings ? If he's wanting then,
The rest might prove as false.

COUN.

He will be there,
I feel he will be there.

SIDO.

We should not think so,
Until our eyes defeat our hopes.

COUN.

O Burgos,
My heart misgave me when I saw thy walls !
To doubt is madness, yet 'tis not despair,
And that may be my lot.

SIDO.

The palace gardens
Are closed, except to master-keys. Here's one ;
My office gives it me, and it can count
Few brethren. You will be alone.

COUN.

Alas !

I dare not hope so.

SIDO.

Well, well, think of this—

Yet take the key.

COUN.

O that it would unlock
The heart now closed to me ! To watch his wants
Was once my being. Shall I prove the spy
Of joys I may not share ? I will not take
That fatal key.

SIDO.

'Tis well ; I pray you, pardon
My ill-timed zeal.

COUN.

Indeed I should be grateful
That one should wish to serve me. Can it be ?
'Tis not two months, two little, little months,
You crossed this threshold first—Ah ! gentle sir,
And we were all so gay ! What have I done ?
What is all this ? so sudden and so strange ?
It is not true, I feel it is not true ;
'Tis factious care that clouds his brow, and calls
For all this timed absence. His brain's busy
With the State—Is't not so ? I prithee speak.
And say you think it.

SIDO.

You should know him well ;
And if you deem it so, why I should deem
The inference just.

COUN.

Yet if he were not there,
How happy I should sleep ! there is no peril ;
The garden's near ; and is there shame ? 'Tis love
Makes me a lawful spy. He'll not be there,
And then there is no prying.

SIDO.

Near at hand,

Crossing the way that bounds your palace court,
There is a private portal.

COUN.

If I go,
He will not miss me. Ah, I would he might !
So very near ; no, no ; I cannot go ;
And yet I'll take the key.

[Takes the key.]

Would thou could'st speak,
Thou little instrument, and tell me all
The secrets of thy office ! My heart beats ;
'Tis my first enterprise—I would it were
To do him service. No, I cannot go ;
Farewell, kind sir ; indeed I am so troubled,
I must retire.

[Exit COUNTESS.]

SIDO.

Thy virtue makes me vile ;
And what should move my heart inflames my soul.
O marvellous world, wherein I play the villain
From very love of excellence ! But for him,
I'd be the rival of her stainless thoughts
And mate her purity—Hah !

Enter ORAN.

ORAN.

My noble lord !

SIDO.

The Moor !

ORAN.

Your servant.

SIDO.

Here ! 'tis passing strange.

How's this ?

ORAN.

The accident of war, my lord.
I am a prisoner.

SIDO.

But at large, it seems.
You have betrayed me ?

ORAN.

Had I chosen that,
I had been free and you not here. I fought,
And fell in single fight. Why spared I know not,
But that the lion's generous.

SIDO.

Will you prove
Your faith ?

ORAN.

Nay, doubt it not.

SIDO.

You still can aid me.

ORAN.

I am no traitor, and my friends shall find
I am not wanting.

SIDO.

Quit these liberal walls
Where you're not watched. In brief, I've coined a tale
Has touched the Countess to the quick. She seeks,
Alone or scantily tended, even now,
The Palace gardens ; eager to discover
A faithless husband, where she'll chance to find
One more devout. My steeds and servants wait
At the right post ; my distant castle soon
Shall hold this peerless wife. Your resolute spirit
May aid me much. How say you, is it well
That we have met ?

ORAN.

Right well. I will embark
Most heartily in this.

SIDO.

With me at once.

ORAN.

At once?

SIDO.

No faltering. You have learned and know
Too much to spare you from my sight, good Oran.
With me at once.

ORAN.

'Tis urgent; well at once,
And I will do good service, or I'll die.
For what is life unless to aid the life
Has aided thine?

SIDO.

On then—with me no eye
Will look with jealousy upon thy step.

[*Exeunt both.*]

SCENE 3.

A retired spot in the Gardens of the Palace.

Enter the COUNTESS.

COUN.

Is't guilt, that I thus tremble? Why should I
Feel like a sinner? I'll not dare to meet
His flashing eye. O, with what scorn, what hate,
His lightning glance will wither me. Away,
I will away. I care not whom he meets.
What if he love me not, he shall not loathe
The form he once embraced. I'll be content
To live upon the past, and dream again
It may return. Alas! were I the false one,
I could not feel more humbled. Ah, he comes!
I'll lie, I'll vow I'm vile, that I came here
To meet another, anything but that
I dared to doubt him. What, my Lord Sidonia!

[*Enter SIDONIA.*]

SIDO.

Thy servant and thy friend. Ah! gentle lady,
I deemed this unused scene and ill-timed hour,
Might render solace welcome. He'll not come;
He crossed the mountains, ere the set of sun,
Towards Briviesca.

COUN.

Holy Virgin, thanks!

Home, home!

SIDO.

And can a hearth neglected cause
Such raptures?

COUN.

I, and only I, neglect it;
My cheek is fire, that I should ever dare
To do this stealthy deed.

SIDO.

And yet I feel
I could do one as secret and more bold.
A moment, lady, do not turn away
With that cold look.

COUN.

My children wait me, sir;
Yet I would thank you, for you meant me kindness.

SIDO.

And mean it yet. Ah! beauteous Florimonde,
It is the twilight hour, when hearts are soft,
And mine is like the quivering light of eve;
I love thee!

COUN.

And for this I'm here, and he,
He is not false! O happiness!

SIDO.

Sweet lady——

COUN.

My Lord Sidonia, I can pardon thee—
I am so joyful.

SIDO.

Nay then.

COUN.

Unhand me, sir!

SIDO.

But to embrace this delicate waist. Thou art mine :
I've sighed and thou hast spurned. What is not yielded
In war we capture. Ere a flying hour,
Thy hated Burgos vanishes. That voice—
What, must I stifle it, who fain would listen
For ever to its song? In vain thy cry—
For none are here but mine.

Enter ORAN.

ORAN.

Turn, robber, turn——

SIDO.

Ah! treason in the camp! Thus to thy heart.

*[They fight. ORAN beats off SIDONIA, they leave the scene
fighting; the COUNTESS swoons.]*

*Enter a procession with lighted torches, attending the Infanta
SOLISA from Mass.*

1ST USH.

A woman!

2ND USH.

Does she live?

SOL.

What stops our course?

*[The Train ranging themselves on each side, the Infanta
approaches the COUNTESS.]*

SOL.

Most strange and lovely vision! Does she breathe?
 I'll not believe 'tis death. Her hand is cold,
 And her brow damp; Griselda, Julia, maidens,
 Hither, and yet stand off; give her free air.
 How shall we bear her home? Now, good Lorenzo,
 You, and Sir Miguel, raise her; gently, gently.
 Still gently, sirs. By heavens, the fairest face
 I yet did gaze on! Some one here should know her;
 'Tis one that must be known. That's well; relieve
 That kerchief from her neck—mind not our state;
 I'll by her side—a swoon, methinks; no more,
 Let's hope and pray!

[They raise the body of the COUNTESS, and bear her away.]

Enter Count of LEON.

LEON.

I'll fathom this same mystery,
 If there be wit in Burgos. I have heard,
 Before I knew the Court, old Nunez Leon
 Whisper strange things—and what if they prove true?
 It is not exile twice would cure that scar.
 I'll reach him yet. 'Tis likely he may pass
 This way; 'tis lonely, and well suits a step
 Would not be noticed. Ha! a man approaches;
 I'll stand awhile aside.

Re-enter ORAN.

ORAN.

Gone, is she gone!
 Yet safe I feel. O Allah! thou art great!
 The arm she bound, and tended with that glance
 Of sweet solicitude, has saved her life,
 And more than life. The dark and reckless villains!
 O! I could curse them, but my heart is soft
 With holy triumph. I'm no more an outcast.
 And when she calls me, I'd not change my lot
 To be an Emir. In their hall to-night
 There will be joy, and Oran will have smiles.

This house has knit me to their fate by ties
Stronger than gyves of iron.

LEON.

Do I see

The man I seek? Oran!

[ORAN turns, and recognising LEON, rushes and seizes him.]

ORAN.

Incarnate fiend,

Give her me, give her me!

LEON.

Off, ruffian, off!

ORAN.

I have thee and I'll hold thee. If I spare
Thy damned life, and do not dash thee down,
And trample on thee, fiend, it is because
Thou art the gaoler of a pearl of price
I cannot gain without thee. Now, where is she?
Now by thy life!

LEON.

Why, thou outrageous Moor,
Hast broken thy false prophet's rule, and so
Fell into unused drink, that thus thou darest
To flout me with thy cloudy menaces?
What mean'st thou, sir? And what have I withheld
From thy vile touch? By heavens, I pass my days
In seeking thy dusk corpse, I deemed well drilled
Ere this, but it awaits my vengeance.

ORAN.

Boy!

Licentious boy! Where is she? Now, by Allah!
This poniard to thy heart, unless thou tell'st me.

LEON.

Whom dost thou mean?

ORAN.

Thy comrade and thy crew;

They all have fled. I left the Countess here.
She's gone. Thou fill'st her place.

LEON.

What Countess? Speak.

ORAN.

The Count Alarcos' wife.

LEON.

The Count Alarcos!

I'd be right glad to see him; but his wife
Concerns the Lord Sidonia. If he have played
Some pranks here 'tis a fool, and he has marred
More than he'll ever make. My time's worth gems;
My knightly word, dusk Moor, I tell thee truth.
I will forget these jests, but we must meet
This night at my palace.

ORAN.

I'll see her first.

[Exit ORAN.]

LEON,

Is it the Carnival? What mummary's this?
What have I heard? One thing alone is clear;
We must be rid of Oran.

SCENE 4.

A Chamber in the Palace. The Countess ALARCOS lying on a Couch, the Infanta kneeling at her side; MAIDENS grouped around. A PHYSICIAN and the PAGE.

SOL.

Didst ever see so fair a skin? Her bodice
Should still be loosened. Bring the Moorish water—
Griselda, you. They are the longest lashes!
They hang upon her cheek. Doctor, there's warmth;
The blood returns?

PHY.

But slowly.

SOL.

Beauteous creature!

She seems an angel fallen from some star.

'Twas well we passed. Untie that kerchief, Julia;

Teresa, wave the fan. There seems a glow

Upon her cheek, that but a moment since

Was like a sculptured saint's.

PHY.

She breathes.

SOL.

Hush, hush!

COUN.

And what is this? where am I?

SOL.

With thy friends.

COUN.

It is not home.

SOL.

If kindness make a home,

Believe it such.

[The PHYSICIAN signifies silence.]

Nay lady, not a word,

Those lips must now be closed. I've seen such eyes

In pictures, girls.

PHY.

Methinks she'll sleep.

SOL.

'Tis well.

Maidens, away. I'll be her nurse—and, doctor,

Remain within.

[Exeunt PHYSICIAN and MAIDENS.]

Know you this beauteous dame?

PAGE.

I have heard minstrels tell that fays are found
In lonely places.

SOL.

Well, she's magical.
She draws me charm-like to her. Vanish, imp,
And see our chambers still.

[Exit PAGE.

It is the hour
Alarcos should be here. Ah! happy hour,
That custom only makes more strangely sweet!
His brow has lost its cloud. The bar's removed
To our felicity; time makes amends
To patient sufferers.

[Enter COUNT ALARCOS.

Hush, my own love, hush!

[SOLISA takes his hand and leads him aside.

So strange an incident! the fairest lady!
Found in our gardens; it would seem a swoon;
Myself then passing; hither we have brought her;
She is so beautiful, you'll almost deem
She bears some charmed life. You know that fays
Are found in lonely places.

ALAR.

In thy garden!
Indeed 'tis strange! The Virgin guard thee, love.
I am right glad I'm here. Alone to tend her,
'Tis scarcely wise.

SOL.

I think, when she recovers,
She'll wave her wings and fly.

ALAR.

Nay, for one glance!
In truth you paint her bright.

SOL.

E'en now she sleeps.
Tread lightly, love; I'll lead you.

[SOLISA cautiously leads ALARCOS to the couch; as they approach
it, the COUNTESS opens her eyes and shrieks.

COUN.

Alarcos!

Ah! 'tis true,

[relapses into a swoon.]

ALAR.

Florimonde!

SOL.

Who is this lady?

ALAR.

It is my wife.

SOL. (*flings away his arm and rushes forward.*)

———Not mad!

Virgin and Saints be merciful—not mad!

O spare my brain one moment—'tis his wife.

I'm lost—she is too fair. The secret's out

Of sick delays. He's feigned—he has but feigned.

[Rushing to Alarcos.]

Is that thy wife? and I—and what am I?

A trifled toy, a humoured instrument?

To guide with glozing words, vilely cajole

With petty perjuries? Is that thy wife?

Thou saidst she was not fair, thou didst not love her:

Thou lied'st. O, anguish, anguish!

ALAR.

By the cross,

My soul is pure to thee. I'm wildered quite.

How came she here?

SOL.

As she shall ne'er return.

Now, Count Alarcos, by the cross thou swearest

Thy faith is true to me.

ALAR.

Ay, by the cross.

SOL.

Give me thy dagger.

ALAR.

Not that hand or mine.

SOL.

Is this thy passion !

[Takes his dagger.]

Thus I gain the heart

I should despise.

[Rushes to the couch.]

COUN.

What's this I see ?

ALAR. *(seizing the Infanta's upraised arm.)*

A dream—

A horrid dream, yet but a dream.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

A C T V.

SCENE 1.

Exterior of the Castle of Alarcos in the valley of Arlanzon.

Enter the COUNTESS.

COUN.

I would recall the days gone by, and live
A moment in the past ; if but to fly
The dreary present pressing on my brain,
Woe's omened harbinger. In exiled love
The scene he drew so fair ! Ye castled crags,
The sunbeam plays on your embattled cliffs,
And softens your stern visage, as his love
Softened our early sorrows. But my sun
Has set for ever ! Once we talked of cares
And deemed that we were sad. Men fancy sorrows
Until time brings the substance of despair,
And then their griefs are shadows. Give me exile !
It brought me love. Ah ! days of gentle joy,
When pastime only parted us, and he
Returned with tales to make our children stare ;
Or called my lute, while, round my waist entwined,
His hand kept chorus to my lay. No more !
O, we were happier than the happy birds ;
And sweeter were our lives than the sweet flowers ;
The stars were not more tranquil in their course,
Yet not more bright ! The fountains in their play
Did most resemble us, that as they flow
Still sparkle !

[Enter ORAN.]

Oran, I am very sad

ORAN.

Cheer up, sweet lady, for the God of all
Will guard the innocent.

COUN.

Think you he'll come
To visit us ? Methinks he'll never come.

ORAN.

He's but four leagues away. This vicinage
Argues a frequent presence.

COUN.

But three nights——
Have only three nights past ? It is an epoch
Distant and dim with passion. There are seasons
Feelings crowd on so, time not flies but staggers ;
And memory poises on her burthened plumes
To gloat upon her prey. Spoke he of coming ?

ORAN.

His words were scant and wild, and yet he murmured
That I should see him.

COUN.

I've not seen him since
That fatal night, yet even that glance of terror—
I'd hail it now. O, Oran, Oran, think you
He ever more will love me ? Can I do
Aught to regain his love ? They say your people
Are learned in these questions. Once I thought
There was no spell like duty—that devotion
Would bulwark love for ever. Now, I'd distil
Philtres, converse with moonlit hags, defile
My soul with talismans, bow down to spirits,
And frequent accursed places, all, yea all—
I'd forfeit all——but to regain his love.

ORAN.

There is a cloud now rising in the west,
In shape a hand, and scarcely would its grasp
Exceed mine own, it is so small ; a spot,

A speck ; see now again its colour flits !
A lurid tint ; they call it on our coast
“ The hand of God ; ” for when its finger rises
From out the horizon, there are storms abroad
And awful judgments.

COUN.

Ah ! it beckons me.

ORAN.

Lady !

COUN.

Yes, yes, see now the finger moves
And points to me. I feel it on my spirit.

ORAN.

Methinks it points to me—

COUN.

To both of us.

It may be so. And what would it portend ?
My heart's grown strangely calm. If there be chance
Of storms, my children should be safe. Let's home.

SCENE 2.

An illuminated Hall in the Royal Palace at Burgos ; in the back-ground Dancers.

Groups of GUESTS passing.

1ST GUEST.

Radiant !

2ND GUEST.

Recalls old days.

3RD GUEST.

The Queen herself
Ne'er revelled it so high !

4TH GUEST.

The Infanta beams
Like some bright star !

5TH GUEST.

And brighter for the cloud
A moment screened her.

6TH GUEST.

Is it true 'tis over
Between the Count Sidonia and the Lara ?

1ST GUEST.

A musty tale. The fair Alarcos wins him.
Where's she to-night ?

2ND GUEST.

All on the watch to view
Her entrance to our world.

3RD GUEST.

The Count is here.

4TH GUEST.

Where ?

3RD GUEST.

With the King ; at least a moment since.

2ND GUEST.

They say she's ravishing.

4TH GUEST.

Beyond belief !

3RD GUEST.

The King affects him much.

5TH GUEST.

He's all in all.

6TH GUEST.

Yon Knight of Calatrava, who is he ?

1ST GUEST.

Young Mendola.

2ND GUEST.

What he so rich ?

1ST GUEST.

The same.

2ND GUEST.

The Lara smiles on him.

1ST GUEST.

No worthier quarry !

3RD GUEST.

Who has the vacant Mastership ?

4TH GUEST.

I'll back

The Count of Leon.

3RD GUEST.

Likely ; he stands well

With the Lord Admiral.

*[They move away.]**(The Counts of SIDONIA and LEON come forward.)*

LEON.

Doubt as you like,
Credulity will come, and in good season.

SIDO.

She is not here that would confirm your tale.

LEON.

'Tis history, my Sidonia. Strange events
Have happened, stranger come.

SIDO.

I'll not believe it.
And favoured by the King ! What can it mean ?

LEON.

What no one dares to say.

SIDO.

A clear divorce.

O that accursed garden ! But for that—

LEON.

'Twas not my counsel. Now I'd give a purse
To wash good Oran in Arlanzon's wave ;
The dusk dog needs a cleansing.

SIDO.

Hush ! here comes

Alarcos and the King.

(They retire : the KING and COUNT ALARCOS advance.)

KING.

Solisa looks

A Queen.

ALAR.

The mirror of her earliest youth
Ne'er shadowed her so fair !

KING.

I am young again,
Myself to-night. It quickens my old blood
To see my nobles round me. This goes well.
'Tis courts like these that make a King feel proud.
Thy future subjects, cousin.

ALAR.

Gracious Sire,

I would be one.

KING.

Our past seclusion lends
A lustre to this revel.

*(The KING approaches the Count of LEON ; SOLISA advances to
ALARCOS.)*

SOL.

Why art thou grave ?
I came to bid thee smile. In truth, to-night

I feel a lightness of the heart to me
Hath long been strange.

ALAR.

'Tis passion makes me grave.

I muse upon thy beauty. Thus I'd read
My oppressed spirit, for in truth these sounds
Jar on my humour.

SOL.

Now my brain is vivid
With wild and blissful images. Canst guess
What laughing thought unbidden, but resistless,
Plays o'er my mind to-night? Thou canst not guess:
Meseems it is our bridal night.

ALAR.

Thy fancy

Outruns the truth but scanty.

SOL.

Not a breath.

Our long-vexed destinies—even now their streams
Blend in one tide. It is the hour, Alarcos:
There is a spirit whispering in my ear,
The hour is come. I would I were a man
But for a rapid hour. Should I rest here,
Prattling with gladsome revellers, when time,
Steered by my hand, might bring me to a port
I long had sighed to enter? But, alas!
These are a woman's thoughts.

ALAR.

And yet I share them.

SOL.

Why not to-night? Now, when our hearts are high,
Our fancies glowing, pulses fit for kings,
And the whole frame and spirit of the man
Prepared for daring deeds?

ALAR.

And were it done—

Why then 'twere not to do.

SOL.

The mind grows dull,
 Dwelling on method of its deeds too long.
 Our schemes should brood as gradual as the storm;
 Their acting should be lightning. How far is't?

ALAR.

An hour.

SOL.

Why it wants two to midnight yet.
 O could I see thee but re-enter here,
 Ere yet the midnight clock strikes on my heart
 The languish of new hours—I'd not ask thee
 Why I had missed the mien, that draws to it ever
 My constant glance. There'd need no speech between us;
 For I should meet——my husband.

ALAR.

'Tis the burthen
 Of this unfilled doom weighs on my spirit.
 Why am I here? My heart and face but mar
 This festive hall. To-night, why not to-night?
 The night will soon have past: then 'twill be done.
 We'll meet again to-night. [Exit ALARCOS.]

SCENE 3.

A Hall in the Castle of ALARCOS; in the back of the Scene a door leading to another Apartment.

ORAN.

Reveal the future, lightnings! Then I'd hail
 That arrowy flash. O darker than the storm,
 Cowed as the beasts now crouching in their caves,
 Is my sad soul. Impending o'er this house,
 I feel some bursting fate, my doomed arm
 In vain would ward.

[*Enter a MAN AT ARMS.*

How now, hast left thy post?

MAN.

O worthy Castellan, the lightnings play
Upon our turrets, that no human step
Can keep the watch. Each forked flash seems missioned
To scath our roof, and the whole platform flows
With a blue sea of flame.

ORAN.

It is thy post.

No peril clears desertion. To thy post.

Mark me, my step will be as prompt as thine;

I will relieve thee.

[*Exit MAN AT ARMS.*

Let the mischievous fire

Wither this head. O Allah! grant no fate

More dire awaits me.

[*Enter the COUNT ALARCOS.*

Hah! the Count! My lord,

In such a night!

ALAR.

A night that's not so wild

As this tempestuous breast. How is she, Oran?

ORAN.

Well.

ALAR.

Ever well.

ORAN.

The children—

ALAR.

Wine, I'm wearied.

The lightning scared my horse; he's galled my arm.

Get me some wine.

[*Exit ORAN.*

The storm was not to stop me.

The mind intent construes each natural act

To a personal bias, and so catches judgments

In every common course. In truth the flash,
Though it seemed opening hell, was not so dreadful
As that wild glaring hall.

[Re-enter ORAN with a goblet and flagon.]

Ah! this re-man's me!

I think the storm has lulled. Another cup.
Go see, good Oran, how the tempest speeds.

[Exit ORAN.]

An hour ago I did not dare to think
I'd drink wine more.

Re-enter ORAN.

ORAN.

The storm indeed has lulled
As by a miracle; the sky is clear,
There's not a breath of air; and from the turret
I heard the bell of Huelgas.

ALAR.

Then 'twas nothing.
My spirit vaults! Oran, thou dost remember
The night that we first met?

ORAN.

'Tis graven deep
Upon my heart.

ALAR.

I think thou lov'st me, Oran?

ORAN.

And all thy house.

ALAR.

Nay, thou shalt love but me.
I'll no divisions in the hearts that are mine.

ORAN.

I have no love but that which knits me to thee
With deeper love.

ALAR.

I found thee, Oran, what—

I will not say. And now thou art, good Oran,
A Prince's Castellan.

ORAN.

I feel thy bounty.

ALAR.

Thou shalt be more. But serve me as I would,
And thou shalt name thy meed.

ORAN.

To serve my lord
Is my sufficient meed.

ALAR.

Come hither, Oran.

Were there a life between me and my life,
And all that makes that life a thing to cling to,
Love, Honour, Power, ay, what I will not name
Nor thou canst image—yet enough to stir
Ambition in the dead—I think, good Oran,
Thou would'st not see me foiled?

ORAN.

Thy glory's dearer
Than life to me.

ALAR.

I knew it, I knew it.

Thou shalt share all; thy alien blood shall be
No bar to thy preferment. Hast thou brothers?
Go send for them. An aged sire, perchance?
There's gold for him. Count it thyself. Contrive
All means of self-enjoyment. To the full
They shall lap up fruition. Thou hast, all have,
Some master wish which still eludes thy grasp,
And still's the secret idol of thy soul;
'Tis gained. And only if thou dost, good Oran,
What love and duty prompt.

ORAN.

Count on my faith,
I stand prepared to prove it.

ALAR.

Good, good, Oran!

It is an hour to midnight?

ORAN.

The moon is not
Within her midnight bower, yet near.

ALAR.

So late!

The Countess sleeps?

ORAN.

She has long retired.

ALAR.

She sleeps.

O, she must wake no more!

ORAN.

Thy wife!

ALAR.

It must

Be done, ere yet the Castle chime shall tell
Night wanes.

ORAN.

Thy wife! God of my fathers! none
Can do this deed!

ALAR.

Upon thy hand it rests.
The deed must fall on thee.

ORAN.

I will not do it.

ALAR.

Thy oath, thy oath! Hast thou forgot thy oath?
Thou owest me a life, and now I claim it.
What, hast thou trifled with me? Hast thou fooled
With one whose point was at thy throat? Beware!

Thou art my slave, and I have branded thee
With this infernal ransom !

ORAN.

I am thy slave,
And I will be thy slave, and all my days
Devoted to perdition. Not for gold
Or worldly worth ; to cheer no aged parent,
Though I have one, a mother ; not to bask
My seed within thy beams ; to feed no passions
And gorge no craving vanity ; but because
Thou gavest me life, and led to that which made
That life for once delicious. O great sir,
The King's thy foe ? Surrounded by his guards
I would waylay him. Hast thou some fierce rival ?
I'll pluck his heart out. Yea ! there is no peril
I'd not confront, no rack I'll not endure,
No great offence commit, to do thee service—
So thou wilt spare me this, and spare thy soul
This unmatched sin.

ALAR.

I had exhausted suffering
Ere I could speak to thee. I claim thy oath.

ORAN.

One moment, yet one moment. This is sudden
As it is terrible.

ALAR.

The womb is ripe,
And thou art but the midwife of the birth
I have engendered.

ORAN.

Think how fair she is,
How gracious, how devoted !

ALAR.

Need I thee
To tell me what she is !

ORAN.

Thy children's mother.

ALAR.

Would she were not! Another breast should bear
My children.

ORAN.

Thou inhuman bloody man—
It shall not be, it cannot, cannot be.
I tell thee, tyrant, there's a power abroad
E'en now that crushes thee. The storm that raged
Blows from a mystic quarter. 'Tis the hand
Of Allah guides the tempest of this night.

ALAR.

Thine oath, thine oath!

ORAN.

Accursed be the hour
Thou sparedst my life!

ALAR.

Thine oath, I claim thine oath.
Nay, Moor, what is it? 'Tis a life, and thou
Hast learnt to rate existence at its worth.
A life, a woman's life! Why, sack a town,
And thousands die like her. My faithful Oran,
Come let me love thee, let me find a friend
When friends can prove themselves. It's not an oath
Vowed in our sunshine ease, that shows a friend;
'Tis the tempestuous mood like this, that calls
For faithful service.

ORAN.

Hah! the Emir's blood
Cries for this judgment. It was sacred seed.

ALAR.

It flowed to clear thine honour. Art thou he
That honour loved so dearly, that he scorned
Betrayal of a foe, although that foe
Had changed him to a bravo?

ORAN.

Let me kiss
Thy garment's hem, and grovel at thy feet.
I pray, I supplicate—my lord, my lord—
Absolve me from that oath!

ALAR.

I had not thought
To claim it twice. It seems I lacked some judgment
In man, to deem that honour might be found
In hired stabbers.

ORAN.

Hah! I vowed to thee
A life for that which thou didst spare—'tis well.
The debt is paid. *[Stabs himself and falls.]*

Enter the COUNTESS from the inner Chamber.

COUN.

I cannot sleep—my dreams are full of woe!
Alarcos! my Alarcos! Hah! dread sight!
Oran!

ORAN.

O, spare her; 'tis no sacrifice
If she be spared.

COUN.

Wild words! Thou dost not speak
O, speak, Alarcos! speak!

ORAN.

His voice is death.

COUN.

Ye Saints uphold me now, for I am weak
And lost. What means this? Oran dying! Nay—
Alarcos! I'm a woman. Aid me, aid me.
Why's Oran thus? O, save him, my Alarcos!
Blood! And why shed? Why, let us staunch his wounds.
Why are there wounds? He will not speak. Alarcos,
A word, a single word! Unhappy Moor!
Where is thy hurt? *[Kneels by ORAN.]*

ORAN.

That hand! This is not death;
Tis Paradise. *[Dies.]*

ALAR. (*advancing in soliloquy*)

He sets me great examples.

'Tis easier than I deemed ; a single blow
And his bold soul has fled. His lavish life
Enlists me in quick service. Quit that dark corpse ;
He died as did become a perjured traitor.

COUN.

To whom, my lord ?

ALAR.

To all Castille perchance.

Come hither, wife. Before the morning breaks,
A lengthened journey waits thee. Art prepared ?

COUN. (*springing to ALARCOS*)

I will not go. Alarcos, dear Alarcos,
Thy look is terrible ! What mean these words ?
Why should'st thou spare me ? Why should Oran die ?
The veil that clouds thy mind—I'll rend it. Tell me—
Yea ! I'll know all. A power supports me now
Defies even thee.

ALAR.

A traitor's troubled tongue
Disturbs thy mind. I tell thee, thou must leave
This castle promptly.

COUN.

Not to Burgos—say
But that. I will not go. That fatal woman—
Her shadow's on thy soul.

ALAR.

No, not to Burgos.
'Tis not to Burgos that thy journey tends.
The children sleep ?

COUN.

Spite of the storm.

ALAR.

Go—kiss them.

Thou canst not take them with thee. To thy chamber—
Quick to thy chamber.

[*The COUNTESS as if about to speak, but ALARCOS stops her.*

Nay, time presses, wife—

[*The COUNTESS slowly re-enters her Chamber.*

ALAR.

I am alone—with Death. And will she look
Serene as this? The visage of a hero
Stamped with a martyred end! Thou noble Moor!
What if thy fate were mine! Thou art at rest:
No dark fulfilment waits o'er thee. The tomb
Hath many charms.

(*The COUNTESS calls.*)

Alarcos!

ALAR.

Ay, anon.

Why did she tell me that she lived? Methought
It was all past. I came to confront death;
And we have met. This sacrificial blood—
What, bears it no atonement? 'Twas an offering
Fit for the Gods.

[*The midnight bell.*

She waits me now; her hand
Extends a diadem; my achieveless arm
Would wither at her scorn. 'Tis thus, Solisa,
I gain thy heart and realm!

[*ALARCOS moves hastily to the Chamber, which he enters; the stage for some seconds is empty; a shriek is then heard; ALARCOS re-appears, very pale, and slowly advances to the front of the Stage.*

'Tis over and I live. I heard a sound;
Was't Oran's spirit?
I'll not rest here, and yet I dare not back.
The bodies? Nay, 'tis done—I'll not shrink now.
I have seen death before. But is this death?
Methinks a deeper mystery. Well, 'tis done.

There'll be no hour so dark as this. I would
I had not caught her eye.

[A trumpet sounds.]

The Warder's note?

Shall I meet life again?

[Another trumpet sounds.]

Enter the SENESCHAL.

SEN.

Horsemen from Court.

ALAR.

The Court! I'm sick at heart. Perchance she's eager,
And cannot wait my coming. *[Enter two COURTIERS.]*
Well, good sirs!

1ST COURT.

Alas, my lord.

ALAR.

I live upon thy words.

What now?

1ST COURT.

We have rode post, my lord.

ALAR.

Bad news

Flies ever. 'Tis the King?

1ST COURT.

Alas!

ALAR.

She's ill.

My horse, my horse there!

1ST COURT.

Nay, my lord, not so.

ALAR.

Why then I care for nought.

1ST COURT.

Unheard-of horror!

The storm, the storm——

ALAR.

I rode in it.

1ST COURT.

Methought

Each flash would fire the Citadel; the flame
 Wreathed round its pinnacles, and poured in streams
 Adown the pallid battlements. Our revellers
 Forgot their festival, and stopped to gaze
 On the portentous vision. When behold!
 The curtained clouds re-opened, and a bolt
 Came winged from the startling blue of Heaven,
 And struck——the Infanta!

ALAR.

There's a God of Vengeance.

1ST COURT.

She fell a blighted corpse. Amid the shrieks
 Of women, prayers of hurrying multitudes,
 The panic and the stir—we sought for thee;
 The King's overwhelmed.

ALAR.

My wife's at least a Queen;
 She reigns in Heaven. The King's o'erwhelmed—poor
 man!

Go tell him, sirs, the Count Alarcos lived
 To find a hell on earth; yet thus he sought
 A deeper and a darker.

THE END.





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